ro Christo et Ecclesia

PRO CHRISTO ET ECCLESIA

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by [Lily Dougall]

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς. Ὑμεῖς ἐκ τῶν κάτω ἐστέ, ἐγὼ ἐκ τῶν ἄνω εἰμί· ὑμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ἐστέ, ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου.

ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον, οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν αὐτῷ.

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ARGUMENT

PART I

CHAPTER I

(1) Jesus is the supreme religious genius.

(2) The battle between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of the world is fought within the pale of the Church.

(3) It was the most religious people who were the foes and murderers of the Christ.

(4) This tragedy became manifest once historically because of its eternal enaction.

(5) Its three chief elements—the Christ-Life, Pharisaism, and Sadduceeism — are ever present within the Church, reproducing the same tragedy.

(6) The same conflict persists within every soul influenced by Christ.

CHAPTER II

CHAPTER III

(2) Beginning with the revival under Ezra, the history of the religious ardour of Judaism may be traced.

(3) After the persecution under Antiochus, the sacerdotal and conservative party differentiated from the more progressive interpreters of the law, who gained the name of Separatists.

(4) We can have no difficulty in sympathising with the ideal of Separatism, because it is advocated in all schools of religious thought to-day.

(5) Our horror of the word "legal" as applied to religion, and our trained antipathy to any avowed ostentation in piety, cause us to misunderstand the Pharisees. With them the legal was the holy, and ostentation was chiefly a party badge used for the sake of influence.

(6) While nearly all the ground of Judaism was held in common by the two sects—the Sadducees being merely the more moderate and stagnant—the Pharisees represented the culmination of the religious enthusiasms generated by the post-exilian revival. They were fighting nobly for the purest religious system the world then knew.

(7) When Jesus denounced them as "hypocrites" and "children of hell," he must have referred to a principle of falsity so deep that it could underlie good intention.

(8) The life-long contest between the pious Pharisee and Jesus is the most salient point in the drama of the Christ, and God's fullest teaching to man must therefore be found in the struggle.

CHAPTER IV

CHAPTER V

CHAPTER VI

CHAPTER VII

CHAPTER II

PART III

CHAPTER I

CHAPTER II

CHAPTER III

(3) On the human side it implies the life of humble prayer.

(4) Such prayer must keep the individual safe with God and within the Church.

(5) If the chief office of the Church is to echo the unconditional call of Jesus to immediate fellowship with him, to echo his offer of fellowship with us in our fullest life or in our feeblest doubt, are the labourers reaping the harvest ?

PART I

CHAPTER I

THE GREAT DRAMA

ALL of us who are called by the name of Jesus, whatever our form of creed, acknowledge him to be the supreme religious genius. We admit that all the broken lights that flickered before him gather in his light, and that all force of development since has this for its condition—that it should occur in nations that have accepted him as Master. We see all the reasonings of the race about life and death, God and duty, enter the heart of the Christ as the rays of light focus in the burning glass, passing thence to set fire to the world.

But if we would know what the Lord

of Thought approved, it is of first consequence that we should know what he hated. If we would know what God would teach in the perfect drama of the Christ, we may better understand who were his friends by recognising the true character of his enemies.

The scene and cast of God's inevitable choice reads thus :—

SCENE.—*Within the pale of the Church*

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

JESUS.	The Lord of Thought.
The disciples (*i.e.* hearts waiting to learn of him).	Intimate friends of Jesus.
Publicans and sinners (*i.e.* those who knew themselves sinful).	Chosen as his friends, and very friendly to him.
Samaritans and semi-heathen population (*i.e.* heretics and unbelievers).	Sometimes highly commended by Jesus for faith and love. Sought by him. Some of them his friends, some rejectors.
The religious—comprising : (*a*) *Sadducees* (*i.e.* those orthodox and stagnant in belief, limiting the sphere of personal religion).	Rejected by Jesus, and bitterly inimical to him.

(*b*) *Pharisees* — Separatists (*i.e.* those progressive in belief; determined to govern the whole life by an increasing application of religious law and increasing separation from evil-doers).	Rejected by Jesus, and bitterly inimical to him.
The unthinking multitude (*i.e.* those swayed by appearance).	Sometimes friends, sometimes enemies.
The Gentiles (*i.e.* the non-church).	Uninfluenced by Jesus.[1]

Although it is said in Malachi that Jehovah's name is great among the heathen, that in all places incense is offered to him, and although some approach to the true character of God was by many found under heathen titles, yet these had no common tie to unite them, and there is no doubt that, from the Christian point of view, the idea conveyed to us by the word "church" had before Christ reality only in Judaism. He himself is particular in this distinction, saying that salvation was of the Jews, for they knew what they worshipped, and

[1] In the only incident in which Gentiles are reported to have sought to hear the words of Jesus, they were Greek proselytes, having crossed the threshold of the Jewish Church.

that he was not come but to the house of Israel. And so John: "He came unto his own." This fact of the highest revelation coming to the existent Church was, of course, the outcome of no arbitrary choice; spirit can only work upon unspiritual men through the medium of men spiritually minded. We need to keep clearly in mind that in God's great tragedy the contest between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world was fought within the Church.

Now, if this drama of the Christ has the significance that we, especially we who call him God, attach to it, we cannot suppose it to be a mere happening in time and place. It became manifest historically because it was needful that men should study it once in outward show, that they might recognise its inward and perpetual truth. It is always being enacted. The religious mind of the Church tends to Judaism—the imposing of selfish limitations upon divine love—by its very human nature. We are,

each one of us, of the party of Pharisee or Sadducee "by faith," as surely as by nature we have ardently scrupulous or secular tendencies. In the Church there are, besides, always a large number who inwardly own the authority of faith, but have postponed or despaired of obedience to it. In its midst stands always the Christ, representing just as much of the vast creative heart as we can assimilate. To the Christ are drawn the little band of seekers for the heart of love.

But the drama of the Christ-life is probably both more universal and more particular than this. Within the soul of every one who by near or remote touch has been born again of his Spirit, Judaism—the interpretation of God by our selfish, *i.e.* separatist, opinions—is wrestling in undying struggle with the divine revelation offered to our new-born discipleship. This contest, probably more than any other in all worshippers of a personal God, is the contest of the old man and the new, the flesh and the spirit.

CHAPTER II

TRUE AND FALSE RELIGION

ARE not creeds, opinions, and ideals so much a product of circumstances that a man who is faithful to truth as he sees it could never by the Lord of Thought be cursed for his mistake as the Pharisees and Sadducees were cursed by Jesus? May we not say "Yes and No"? There are creeds and ideals which contradict the knowledge of the heart, and there are those — more mad, maybe, from the common point of view—which do not.

Perhaps in a simple instance of obvious mistake we trace this difference at its source. Let us take the well-worn

example of the Indian mother who casts her child before the idol car. Let us suppose that there are two such.

The first feels that, represented by the god, there is a goodness which she has not satisfied, which craves recognition from her by the gift of her best, as she craves caress from the object of her love. Vague, wordless, as the feeling is, this is its nature. Heart full of love, breast full of milk, she knows how to give with devotion to her offspring; but there is one who has a nearer and higher claim than even the sucking child, so she gives her best, heart-broken, but with blind comfort, believing that even for herself and the child it is better so. She cannot, perhaps, say the word "love," yet is dominated by the highest voice of her heart. Her desire is to give rather than to get, so that she is able to perceive what is highest within herself, and attributes the same characteristics to her God.

The second woman desires favour from God, and attributes to him those characteristics which come uppermost in the dealings of man with man when gain, not gift, is the matter in mind. Her God is to be propitiated by zeal for his cause, and by mere profitless suffering; for this last, even in a hard man, will sometimes excite to largess when mere bribes will not move. If she could listen to the passion of mother love within, she would know it to be a higher thing; but greed has a curious power of exciting the mind to arguments in favour, not of the great justice of love, but of the petty justice of exactions. She sacrifices her child, satisfied that her God is such as will be gratified by the suffering, and will reward her according to the cost of the gift, and also for the excellent example which she is setting to her neighbours. She is sure she is in the right way; it is this assurance that is her spiritual pride, for she is not self-

satisfied, because her God is so punctilious that he may not be wholly pleased on all points, and the minds of her neighbours are not easily formed on the pattern she approves.

If these two descriptions are but an analysis of types, the latter much more common than the former, two points are obvious—first, that both women are equally sincere, the latter probably much more consciously sincere than the former, because her mind, self-centred rather than lost in the object of devotion, is excited to greater energy of definition ; secondly, that if there should appear between them a preacher telling of a humble God who finds it more blessed to give than to receive, the second woman would feel it her duty to rebuke that preacher's laxity, and the first would reveal a latent power of true discipleship causing her to cleave to him. It would appear, then, that the second was guilty of this principle of rejection before opportunity

arose, and that her chief guilt lay, not in child murder, nor in any mistaken system of worship, but in that true idolatry which sets up as an object of worship something lower than the best that can be known. The one woman has never worshipped less than the highest; the other carves out of her own selfishness and spiritual pride a divinity to which her higher impulses of love, if she would but listen to them, could give the lie.

All through the argument of Jesus with the Church of his day runs, as his ultimate appeal, the recognition of this human power of insight into love. "If ye then, being evil, know——"

Surely, then, we may assume at the outset of this inquiry, that there is in man that heart-knowledge—a knowledge pertaining to simple human loves—which, if inadequate of itself to lead to God, is such that any conception of him which contradicts it, imports into the very

source of religious life the deadly poison of lies; in other words, that a religious life is entirely dominated by the conception of God's character that inspires it, and that when this character contradicts the God-given heart within, it is a false God and a false religion, however sincerely carried into effect. If we put this idea into the terms of the whole dramatic march of Bible story, does it not appear that what image-worship had been to the Church before the time of literature, the worship of ideas concerning God which had their root in selfishness was afterwards? Such idolatry is exemplified in separatism, and sincerity in it does not alter the fact that its devotees are hypocrites, *i.e.* play-actors, playing a part, not living their true life, false to their own hearts, acting their religion to a God who does not exist, and to men who are their only admiring audience.

And further, as the Jews first arrived at the presumption of an after-life by a

growing sense of the importance of individuality and of the faithfulness of God, so should the fuller recognition of these same truths lead us on to the clear conviction that the rewards of the next world can be none other than the appropriate fulfilment of character in this; and in interpreting the promises of Christ to his own disciples we must realise that the heaven of humility and love, the region nearest himself which he assigns to them alone, is to be distinguished from the "outer darkness," as earth's best love scenes are distinguished from its lower goods as well as from its worst evils.

All honest seeking after good, however mistaken, must attain to such character as is moulded by the quality of faith and hope and effort exercised. Each of us—pharisee, sadducee, or disciple—must go to "his own place." Whether in the immediate paradise, the "third heaven" of God's humility and

universal love, or in some lower region of conscious rightness and monopolised blessing, it must still ever be true that the honest shall have all those causes of joy, those opportunities of development, to which their natures can respond.

Let us then successively consider the characters of Pharisee and Sadducee, and of the Christ-life as formed in the true disciple.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL GROWTH OF THE CHARACTERS OF PHARISEE AND SADDUCEE

An authoritative account of the sects of Pharisee and Sadducee may now be gathered by every English reader from the works of Edersheim and the translated books of Schürer and Kuenen. It is remarkable, more especially with regard to the Pharisees and Scribes, that no charge of falsity and immorality is brought against them as a body except as the denunciation of Jesus may be quoted to imply such charge.

It is the contention of this chapter that the woes of the Gospels were hurled

against men well known to be straining every nerve to attain an ideal of righteousness in which they most honestly believed.

These sects arose as the sense of the sublimity of Jehovah's character was deepening in the progressive thought of the Jews, and the importance of obeying his revealed will was laid more and more on the individual, as distinguished from the tribal, conscience. After the revival under Ezra and Nehemiah the force of religious life shows itself chiefly in the growth of a devoted class of instructors in the law. It was owing to their disinterested zeal that two hundred years before our era it might be said with truth to every Jew, however obscure, "That word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayst do it." The whole written law as attributed to Moses may not have been God's will, but it was the religion of the Jew to believe it to be God's will

and applicable in all its details to the individual life. The oral tradition, which was the explanation of the law, and its application to everyday incident, made individual obedience to it possible. When we further consider the really spiritual nature of the synagogue services, which were established everywhere for the teaching of the law, and that the psalms of the period express no sense of a burdensome nature of this applied law, but rather the liveliest delight in its precepts, we shall realise what ardour of religion must have inspired this great legal movement. When we chant to-day one or other of these psalms do we understand that historically we are rejoicing in the minutiæ of tithings and ablutions and sabbatical exactions, the keeping of which caused the devout Jew to feel in harmony with God?

"*The statutes of the Lord are right, and rejoice the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, and giveth light to the eyes.*"

"*More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb.*"

"*Moreover by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward.*"

We borrow these and other words of devotion from this epoch: it would be well to remember that just as the practice of our own religious habits produces in us the frame of mind which makes us feel able to pray, so was the religious conscience of the Jew dependent upon knowing and observing legal formalities.

We know that in accord with this rising enthusiasm for the law, the priests of the early post-exilian period had been moving to magnify their office and enhance the sacredness of the Temple services. Much religious ardour is crystallised in their elaborated hierarchical system. Yet there was this difference between the enthusiasts for priestcraft and the enthusiasts for the law: the

priests had every mercenary advantage to gain by their zeal, while the zeal of the lawyers was necessarily more disinterested. Following this clue we are not surprised that history shows us a few noble, but many most contemptible, priests, while the scribes of the law gained from the people increasing testimony to their unselfish zeal.

The sincerity of both classes was tested by the terrible religious persecution under Antiochus. Many failed, but in the main the national religion rose to a grander height. A priestly family, unspoiled by previous power, delivered the church. The teachers of law also came out from the fire heroic in the nation's eyes. This national ordeal gave another impulse to spiritual life, but an increasing quarrel between priest and teacher is from this time apparent.

The priests, combining personal ambition with faith in the promise of national glory, desired to make Judea

independent and a warlike nation—a course which must have subordinated the religious interests to the military in the state. This the lawyers saw, and, with a surely more spiritual, if still material, faith, preferred to sacrifice national independence for the time in order to preserve, as far as might be, the idea of the theocracy. This was a great issue. It separated the law enthusiasts and the priestly class from this time onward till the end of the Jewish state.

The priestly and aristocratic class was, of course, entered by descent, not by choice ; but a member of it could reject the prejudices of his class and become an enthusiast for the people, teaching that the more divine element of Judaism was the revealed will, *i.e.* the law. Conversely, many who were not of priestly family might adhere to priestly opinions and aims, and among them some lawyers, who might, and did, leave the more popular school of religious advance to

form one in harmony with priestly conservatism. Thus the party of the Sadducees represents a temper of mind, a set of opinions, quite as much as the policy of a ruling class. Briefly, Sadduceeism was characterised by sober reason and a reverence for that part of the national religion which had become historic : in religion they did not believe in adding to the doctrine of their fathers ; in secular matters their judgment was not biassed by the enthusiasms of faith. It is probable, despite much opinion to the contrary, that true faith is never conservative ; it must push onward, and root itself in the future. It would seem, also, that genuine conservatism can never seek to realise gain by means of loss, the essential of godliness. The Sadducees were conservative in a very high degree.

The law enthusiasts entered their profession by choice. Almost all the devout among the common people, and some of

the priestly class, were on their side. With them faith in the divine authority of the law so dominated every sphere of life that it biassed all their judgments in political and domestic affairs. Out of sheer devotion to the law, they, as it were, tampered with it, so progressive in relation to the changing circumstances was their oral tradition. For example, the written law taught nothing concerning the resurrection, or of angels and demons, or of the duty of individual prayer, but belief in all these had become necessary to a devout life. The lawyers first assumed that Moses must have taught these doctrines orally; then they said that he did teach them. So with many other doctrines arising from the application of the law, whose full realisation in the individual and national life was the end they pursued. It is easy to understand their position. God's favour depended on full and perfect obedience; when that was attained national deliver-

ance and glory and dominion would be heaven's free gift; therefore they made for the law a fence of unending explications and applications, increasing the number and weight of their exactions, which one and all found their cause and use in this command: "Come out from among them and be ye separate."

This party gained the name of Separatists, *i.e.* Pharisees. Many, indeed, of the legal observances had for their chief aim the dissociation of the pious from the Gentile and the impious. We can have no difficulty in sympathising with this, for is it not an advantage in our own estimation? I could quote, were the sentiment not too familiar to repeat, many passages from recent manuals of devotion, Romanist and Anglican, warnings to those who would lead the higher life, against such reading and behaviour as would put them in touch with companions of another mind.

The restrictions of both these Churches against worship with Christians of other persuasions is well known. Or again, the writings of members of the more advanced evangelical school, such as Rev. Andrew Murray and Mr. Moody, are full of passionate exhortation to separation from "the world." So that we must all be perfectly conversant with this aspect of the pious life.

We miss, however, much of the lively understanding we should have otherwise of the standpoint of the Pharisees by the fact that the words "law" and "legal," as also any avowed ostentation in religion, have become so opprobrious by verbal familiarity with the Gospel condemnation that we need to call the same things by other names in order to recognise that degree of virtue which they really contained. Study of the law meant for the Pharisee increasing obedience to the revealed scripture as interpreted by the progressive tradition

of the true church. The thing that was holy was the thing that was legal. However much they may have been mistaken in their view of authority or in the absurd minutiæ of their applications, their principle must receive the cordial assent of the modern religious mind. As for their ostentation, we have not yet ceased to consider the influence upon others of our religious observances, or to hear it urged as one large reason for being scrupulous. And if this acting for the sake of example still commends itself to us as virtuous after eighteen hundred years' study of the denunciations against display spoken by Jesus, can we not sympathise with the ignorance of those who had never had the evil of ostentation pointed out to them, but who, on the contrary, reverenced all those scriptures which made piety appear the most legitimate ornament of life? Also, it would seem that in these matters our sympathies are

apt to be alienated by judging Pharisaic virtue in the light of the modern conscience. We can justify the deceptions practised by Jewish religious writers on the ground of the then curious condition of the literary and religious mind ; we must also perceive that the boastfulness of the Pharisee is not at all so far removed from our own religious life as are the literary devices of the Chronicler and the author of the Book of Daniel. Let us, then, be prepared to give the Pharisee the benefit of the same sympathetic treatment so far as regards their purity of intention, for they surely deserve it.

The Pharisees were bound by the law to believe in the efficacy of priestly functions, and to support the Temple service with their whole influence. Although Judaism was represented by both sects, it must be remembered that almost all the ground of Judaism was held by the Pharisees, that the Sadducees on

religious lines were merely more moderate and stagnant, and that the very flower and culmination of the revival inaugurated by Ezra was Pharisaism.

In that strange silence of the seers preceding the sunrise, in which God in heaven seems to sleep as the husbandman who knows that the grain ripens to his purpose, the Pharisees stood on the earthly battlements of Jewish faith demanding from those without and those within entire consecration. Their battle-cry was "God"—God the law-giver, God the judge, God the executor, God in the house, God in the market-place, God in the government. To say that their God was only such as their legally trained minds admitted, is only saying of them what must be said in some sense of every church and sect. They pleaded with men to give up the domain of the secular, to obey only the revealed will, to see in it the alpha and omega of intelligence, to wait only upon God for

deliverance. Their willingness to sacrifice nominal independence as a nation for the maintenance of the theocracy would have been a suicidal policy had not faith triumphed over sight. It was in Pharisaic psalms[1] that the vague conception of a coming Saviour of the house of David was first embodied in the word "Messiah." They made their choice of political policy in blind stubborn trust in Jehovah's promises to obedient faith, and they carried the Messianic hope far beyond their own land into almost every civilised place.

The Pharisees who were contemporary with Jesus made no false profession of religious devotion. There were false knaves in the sect—has ever the world seen as many as twelve professed loyalists of whom one was not a traitor?—but the average Pharisee to his heart's core was devout. Nor were these devout Pharisees self-satisfied in the sense of

[1] Book of Enoch.

supposing that all was accomplished. Their law involved unresting effort and perpetual anxiety lest unconscious pollution should be incurred ; they compassed land and sea to make one proselyte. Is such a creed likely to have produced smug self-content?

They were not sinners above all others, these Jews upon whom the corner-stone fell. Although we, who try to make Jesus altogether such an one as ourselves, would like to think them such, history does not bear us out in the desire. What is its testimony, even within the Gospel record? No one who studies character, or the sources of character, can ponder what we read of the only individual Pharisees cited in the New Testament—St. Paul, Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea—and believe that they had been born and trained among wicked men. The meaning we now attach to the denunciations of Jesus implies a depravity which could not have

characterised their teachers and companions. They could never have believed in men whose piety was pretence, whose life-object was self-glorification. Secular history corroborates the negative. In it we see them representing the religious elements of the nation, and distinguished from the masses only by their more perfect devotion, by their greater strictness and consistency. Josephus tells us, "They renounce the enjoyments of life, and in nothing surrender themselves to comfort"; and even if this be a one-sided view, it still remains true that no historian contradicts it.

Are we, then, to deny the dictum of Jesus; to believe that in ignorance he mistook the character of the sect, or that, carried away by opposition into angry hyperbole, he branded the honest eleven with the falseness of the inevitable twelfth? If not ignorant, if not unjust, when he chose the epithets "hypocrites," "children of hell," he must

have referred to a principle of falsity so deep that it could underlie good intention.[1]

The most terrible anger is that of the meek, and Jesus, who never publicly denounced the vicious or criminal, spoke his most scathing words of condemnation and derision against men who were never flagging in their effort to attain to ideals they believed divine, and whose ostentatious piety was, in their own estimation, a witnessing to neglected truth. The wrath of the Lamb blazed out against men who were well-meaning, self-sacrificing, and devout.

If the drama which we call the Gospel is of importance at all, it is surely here that its fullest meaning lies; for this contest between Jesus and the Pharisee is its most salient feature; this contrast between the God-man and the religious purist its warp and woof.

[1] This point is developed in the preceding chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES

It is a curious fact, illustrative of much, that in Christian sermons we often hear the indifferent and the vicious—those who are called "the world" in contradistinction to the religious class—condemned as the murderers of Jesus, whereas the guilt of the deed belonged wholly to men who firmly believed that morality and the worship of the true God would be swept from the earth if his teaching were accepted. Other men, less concerned for religion, might have hindered the crime and did not, but theirs was not the guilt of initiation. From this it surely follows that the chief

task suggested by the Gospel drama is to find wherein the Christ-life seemed to the true pietist subversive of good.

It requires no deep research to perceive wherein the religion of Jesus chiefly differed from that of the pious Jew. His God was the father of sinners; his practice was friendship with sinners.

Now let us consider first his practice, for through that his conception of God's perfection as consisting in blessing equally the just and the unjust is clearly seen.

Jesus feasted with sinners. Some, of course, of his companions at these feasts were sinners only in the legal sense, but some were also vicious. They were all undoubtedly sinners in our sense, not doing what they believed they ought to do, and doing that which they believed they ought not to do. There is no record — not one — that in social converse Jesus interfered with their habits of life by didactic gravity or reproach.

Whenever we have incidents of reform, the reform is distinctly voluntary. Before his ministry he grew in favour with men, and during that ministry with men who knew themselves sinners, and we know that men are so constituted that he who habitually finds fault does not grow in favour with them. It may be urged that there was about him a supernatural grace which disarmed the sinner of his natural dislike for reproof. Why, then, did not this supernatural grace operate with the separatists, whom he certainly did constantly reprove? It cannot have been by accident that the Gospel incidents are selected. If there is no record of Jesus publicly finding fault with men of vicious habits, it is because he did not do it. That he preached and lived a life as far above outward righteousness as it was above sin, does not alter the obvious fact that there could not have been reproach in the sunny serenity of

his behaviour when he fraternised with publicans and sinners. These loved to have him with them, while the righteous looking on cried out in disgust that his manner was convivial. His behaviour gave to the cursory spectator the impression of self-indulgence, and those righteous persons who watched him with critical zeal were confounded and fell back upon a blacker interpretation.

When we consider all of friendliness that it involves to eat a man's bread, the behaviour of Jesus concerning sinners was very remarkable. If our neighbour makes his money by corrupt practice, and we accept his invitation to dinner, it means, if we have any sense of honour at all, that we will stand by him when others condemn ; that we are prepared to justify his dishonesty with at any rate the plea that he is no worse than other men. This last, at least, was what the behaviour of the Christ said—that the faults of the immoral were no worse

than the faults of the moral. Let us again entirely disabuse our minds of the idea that the religious Jews led corrupt lives: they did not. Under their absurd casuistry stood the Ten Commandments, which, according to their light, they kept. "All these have I kept from my youth up," said the young ruler; but Jesus, even in the impulse of love for this beautiful personation of morality, said, "How hardly!" Rich in morals, in respectability, in self-control, in orthodox opinions, in all things that make men able to acquire and keep material goods (the knave is never your typical rich man; his inheritance is but transient), and yet the kingdom of heaven is nearer the sinners. Yes, when he ate the bread of the sinners, an action in those days of tithing more suggestive of comradeship in disobedience to God than it is to-day, Jesus began by saying to the righteous, "They are no worse than you," and he ended by saying, "They

are better; they go into the kingdom before you." Thus the teaching of his practice, added to and filled out by the teaching of his words, appeared to the moralists of that day inimical to the righteousness of their nation.

Take, as an example of this, those seemingly gratuitous defiances of ordinary Sabbath observance, such as telling the impotent man to carry his bed, and allowing his disciples to eat the ears of corn. Absurd as were scribal definitions of the main Sabbath laws, without much definition it would have been impossible to apply those laws to the life of the day. The Jews alone among the nations stood for the Sabbath. Foreign influences were pressing against it on every side. In this the Lord appeared to side with heathen influence against the faithful Jew.

If we look at the behaviour of Jesus in his friendly intercourse with the Pharisees, we shall see how this attitude was emphasised. The washing of

hands before meat was as sacred a symbol to them as is any religious rite to us. Had not Moses prepared the nation by the washing of their persons and garments for the great first covenant? All those frequent baptisms for which Jesus derided the then accepted tradition of God's will were to its devotees, the outward recognition of their belief that human defilement must be washed away ere the simplest blessing could be received, the simplest action performed in the presence of God. The Pharisees did not believe that washings were of avail except as a fulfilment of the divine command. If this same Jesus should come to earth now, and pass through our churches without removing his hat, or should extinguish altar candles, or pray in a sitting posture, he would affect the mind of the reverent ritualist as he affected the mind of the earnest Pharisee by refusing to wash his hands before meat. If he should dwell in

some evangelical household and confess that he did not carry a copy of the Scriptures, or refuse to attend at family prayer, the same effect would be produced. I am not saying here that the rules and customs of our Christendom may not be expressly ordered by God, as the washings of the Pharisees may not have been, but merely that if some great teacher should repudiate them we should not be more hurt and annoyed than was the Pharisee at this conduct of Jesus.

Even yet we are astonished that our Lord should have refused so beautiful and simple a rite. Even if he saw it to be unnecessary, reverence for his brother's faith, good taste, kindness of heart—all these would have prompted gentle compliance. The thing itself was not wrong; wherein lay the virtue of his uncompromising nonconformity?

Jesus would have no share in any outward act which was set up as a test of spiritual condition. The sin

which he is often supposed thus to have rebuked is separation of the observance from its spiritual significance, but on looking nearer this is seen to be a false view. The sin he detested was not the separation of truth from observance, but the spiritual pride that could not separate them. "God, we thank thee that we know the way of salvation, and that we walk in it; that we are not as the people who know not the will and are condemned." Even when the ceremony was harmless he replied, "I take my stand outside your way, with those who, you say, know not the law and are cursed. I neglect your rite, despise your interpretations of Scripture, and make my friends among those who ignore them. See now if you can recognise God's inspiration in another form." And those Pharisees could not. Let us remember that the devout among them thanked God for their privileges, that they coupled this gratitude with an

unresting zeal for converts, and with a sense also that there was something of redeeming force for the many in the faithfulness of the few. Had they lived nowadays we might have defended them, saying how very good they were—"very narrow, bigoted, in fact, but that is almost a necessary consequence of intensity." Jesus Christ called them "children of hell."

We can estimate the earnestness of the Pharisaic retort that his inspiration was Satanic when we again reflect what would be our mental attitude towards a being as evidently exalted and powerful who should to-day appear and contradict what seem to us the obvious tenets of revealed religion, reviling us for our favourite forms of piety. Let us conceive of him, for example, handling our canon of Scripture as roughly as the most destructive of the higher critics, showing himself as indifferent to sacrament and religious service as our modern

philosophers, eating the bread and salt of corrupt politicians and women of doubtful character, and consorting with the ignorant in preference to the clergy. If, at the same time, such a being should proclaim himself the "hope of the righteous," the fulfilment of that promise of the returning Christ upon which the piety of the Church has fed, in proof of his claim should teach his followers a transcendent morality which to us appeared perfectly impracticable, and evince a power over and insight into natural law greater than that of any of "our sons," should we not be in a position analogous to that of the Pharisees? In such a case it would be the most conscientious, the pious women, the hard-working ministers, the mission priests, the theologians, who would take the first and sternest stand, and I cannot see that even the nineteenth century would find a more correct word than "Satanic" to express the mature judgment of the

majority of the Church on such a friend of sinners. The Christian Church may not have gone so far aside from the mind of God as the above picture suggests ; all that is argued is that the Pharisees with good intention had diverged thus far, so that the charge of Satanic possession was a natural one for them to make.

We have before said that, at least to those who believe that Jesus was, is, "very God of very God," it must be wholly incredible that the chief feature of his life on earth was the struggle with a local and transient form of scribal casuistry. Bad as this was, it must have had its root in something worse for this contest to have been chosen as an object-lesson for all time and for all nations. The very fact that scribal puerilities appear to us like a bad fantastic dream which some fools dreamed once to the unending laughter of the world, ought surely to prove to us that it was not at

this form of false religion, but at its life-principle, that God launched his thunders.

This life-principle must be that conception of God's character that made Pharisaism possible. Their God was a God whose favour was conditional upon obedience—obedience to what? If you take a savage and persuade him that God's favour to him depends on his obedience, he will not be long in making a code literal and ever-growing. That is the history of much religion. It matters less what the code is—that is an affair of circumstance and mental development. But in the heart of the prophets God's word has always struggled against natural self-love, against national pride, to make clear that favour must be the cause, not the result, of service. Jesus was the only prophet in whom there was no pride or self-love, in him alone this word could come quite clearly—the father-love, emphasised, as it were, towards disobedience.

In harmony with this is the conception of prayer which depends on the character thus attributed to God. Prayer, as Jesus taught it, was the practice of the presence of the lover of sinners. He never waited for any change of life before dispensing boons from the Father. He did not select his audience when he spoke to them of their Father's readiness to hear. The chiefest and plainest part of his elementary teaching was that the first duty of man is to ask from God, not for greed, but for need, not with anguish, but with confidence. I say he said the first duty of man is to ask, and the response is not conditional but sure. We twist his words into a thousand meanings, but to the candid it is clear that, be Jesus a true or a false teacher, he made no condition for prayer but belief in God's willingness, and staked his reputation on the certainty of a satisfactory issue.

From this teaching about prayer it

follows that God does not favour the obedient more than the disobedient; that he makes the feast for the unfaithful son, and invites the faithful one; that the prayers of the worldlings are as acceptable to him as the prayers of the saints. First come the countless benefits, the eagerness to hear and do, the Father's embrace; afterwards, if the sinner will, service; but, as we have seen before, that is no condition of favour.

The Pharisees cried, "If God be so lax there will be no repentance, no service." Jesus answered, "Follow my path of thought, and I will show you how to bring men to repentance. Because God offers to every man the respect of love, it behoves you to treat sinners with as much respect as you wish them to show to you!"

How perfectly is repulsive behaviour portrayed in the faults against which the teaching of the earlier part of this Sermon on the Mount is directed. What con-

duct chiefly repels us and hardens us in sin? Is it not the assumption by another of the right to judge our motives, to correct our errors, or, still worse, to push in blatant fashion his sacred matters before the unconcerned? When have we least sympathy with men? Is it not when they are seeking to gain spiritual or carnal advantage, when they are ostentatious in prayer, alms, and self-denials, when in trying to be faithful in that which is least they conceive of God's will as a standard to which by effort they can approach nearer than do others? And whenever they are dull, or insipid, or much belauded by the world, when they are indifferent to peace and mercy, and are self-satisfied and proud, are they not very hateful to us? The virtues here lacking are precisely those inculcated in the Sermon on the Mount—good taste, which is only the glorifying of God, respect, trustfulness towards men, contentment and privacy in dealing with

God, distrust of ourselves, and the knowledge that God's love is as far above us as above the vilest—these are the attitudes of mind that will make men good "fishers," that will glorify God and bless us by evoking the best in ourselves or others. These attitudes are to be held not only towards the good, but towards the violent, the borrower, the hateful, the unjust. Why? Because God respects and trusts and loves them.

But the Pharisees could not believe that God offered the respect of love to all his children equally; it appeared to them an immoral belief, so that when Jesus virtually said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate of this abasement, holding yourselves no nearer God, no more worthy the respect of men, than is the lowest; so, and not otherwise, shall ye be saved from the destruction of all your nobler parts by spiritual pride; so, and not otherwise, shall ye abide in me, and keep my words,

and become, not the favourites of God, but the channels of his salvation,"—when he said this they could not conscientiously accept the invitation. Their very conscience was the plant that had to be rooted up.

Yesterday I heard a sermon which seemed to me a fair epitome of almost one-third of all the sermons I ever heard. The preacher said, "Beloved, do not let us fear to be called narrow or even bigoted in our attitude towards sin and error, lest we sink into indifferentism." I would fain have replied, "Pharisee, the Christ stands between; you have overlooked him in your leap. You have said to your flock, 'Fear not to attack him with his bitter enemies on one side, lest you strike with his murderers on the other.'"

CHAPTER V

THE LEAVEN OF THE SADDUCEES

We are all willing to acknowledge that in every modern sect and phase of opinion there is good as well as evil. Are we equally open to see the value of old-time sects upon which the world has long cast opprobrium?

The sin of the Sadducees was religious stagnation, which involves spiritual indifference. They admitted all that (without much investigation) they considered historic in the national religion; they despised and punished any upturning of it; this stood with them for religious zeal. They ruled their daily lives entirely by experience, and omitted

from their calculations the high visions and exalted ideals of faith.

Only five times they are reported to have come voluntarily to Jesus, once asking a sign, once to entrap him with regard to tax-paying, once with the quibble about marriage in the after-life, once questioning his authority, once asking if he heard the praises of the children. He hurled against them no woes and denunciations as against the Pharisees and their scribes. It is our possible friends that we upbraid, not our certain enemies. It appears that he looked upon the Pharisees as the greater sinners, because they had the spiritual faculty which might have been turned towards his light; the Sadducees were lower in the scale of creation. They, the priests, whose function it was to represent the people before God, were so mundane as to be beneath remonstrance, except for a scathing light cast upon them in certain parables. In these we see them going

by on the other side when a higher instinct would have shown plain duty; replying to the call of God "I go," and going not; slaying those spiritual forces of God which are the rightful possessors of the world, in the vain hope, the hope of materialism, that the inheritance should be their own. In these three pictures, where they are presented so vividly, the salient point is lack of spiritual insight into the higher if less obvious good.

The Sadducees, as the ruling class, came under the influence of foreign culture. They sought to bring its advantages within reach of their nation. In state-craft they showed excellent worldly wisdom, desiring to make wise compromises with the spirit of the age and the surrounding nations. For these tendencies the Pharisees reviled them, and indeed by all those passages in the Jewish religious writings which cry for separateness from the heathen as the primal duty of the Jehovah-worshipper

they are condemned. It is interesting to consider whether on these points Jesus condemns also. He sees their position clearly, for he warned his disciples against the leaven of Herod as equivalent to that of the Sadducees. With that keen insight into national events which enabled him to forecast the downfall of the state, he could never have looked upon this tendency in the ruling class as unimportant; but there is not any evidence that he who proclaimed that their spiritual inheritance should shortly be given to foreigners, disapproved in the slightest degree of un-Judaising influences. If he considered that the isolated position advocated by so many Jewish writers was necessary to spirituality, that the liberal embrace which the Sadducees were giving to secular learning was the root of their spiritual death, is it not probable that he would have touched upon this in his vivid parable sketches,

or mentioned it in his direct dealing? He indicates where their fatal lack lay when he reproves them for not attending John's great revival meetings and being converted, when he grieves because they will not render unto God the things that are God's; but he expressly commands that Cæsar also have his due. Any one who has learned the incomparable riches of his least word will be slow to think that as he held the Roman penny he thought only of the tax-collector. The principle he then laid down must apply to all departments of a liberal life.

Again, he does not treat with them at all concerning their difference with the Pharisees. That he was keenly aware of this sectarian difference is only shown by his change of tone when passing from one to the other. His words to the Sadducees are very sparing, and to the last his silence towards them is marked.

It is worth while to consider the chasm, the great gulf, that was fixed between him and them, so wide that he was hardly able to bridge it over with the music of his call to life. The voice which so easily penetrated the tomb almost failed here.

What possible meaning could attach to the constant assertion of Jesus that every prayer is answered, if, as they assumed, experience were limited to this world? The first essential of the true art of living which he preached is undoubtedly that this life should be considered as the merest fragment of an immortal existence. His passion of faith in the larger life which perfects this was an organic part of his trust in God's fatherhood. He was emphatically not content with the adjustment of things here except as a part of a whole. Our most violent pessimist is not more disappointed with earth, apart from heaven, than was Jesus, the incarnation of hope.

The ground on which he urges the transcendent importance of this life is the boundless reach of God's providence, ever suggested by some fresh and exquisite figure, our experience here being but, as it were, a trial trip for each little psychic ship. His teaching that they are most blessed who lose all in this life for the sake of his "glad tidings" is, as St. Paul remarks, pure nonsense if the dead are only to live in some mystical precipitate of their lives, by the chemistry of earthly results. Nothing is more obvious in the thought of Jesus than that he had a keen and unwavering appreciation of what human gladness is and is not, so that when he called his distinctive doctrine the "glad tidings," and in the same breath demanded of his followers the rejection of all they valued, it is clear that he conceived of himself as having the power to bestow goods not less real if beyond earthly ken. All this is both

embraced and transcended in his doctrine of life in himself.

Here, then, is the fixed gulf. He said, "I am the resurrection." The Sadducees asked him, "In the resurrection whose wife shall a woman be if the seven had her to wife?"

Is it possible to conceive planes of thought further apart? We feel that the dog or horse which waits always on its master with loving eyes is nearer to the man's range of vision than were the Sadducees to Jesus.

They were not ignorant. The Jews were the one people on earth who gave laws to their conquerors, nay, to the world, and the Sadducees were the social and intellectual aristocracy of the Jews. They were responsible for the ship of state, and for the most part steered her wisely when they could control the fanaticism of Pharisee and zealot. They sprang from the heroes who had purchased freedom for a pure monotheism

by almost incredible acts of valour. They had chosen the golden mean between the bigotry of the extreme pietists and the unbelief which pressed upon them in the surrounding march of intellectual progress.

The wisdom of this type of mind was admired by Jesus. Again and again he holds it up for imitation in such words as "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." "Be ye wise as serpents." "The Lord commended the unjust steward; for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." But against the religious degeneracy of these same men, against their spiritual indifferentism, by all the force of his ministry he said, "Man shall not live by bread alone." And he wrote "Death" upon the portals of the temple where they made it their whole business to sacrifice to God.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHRIST-LIFE

As the sun seems to us to stand at mid-day between east and west, but in reality is only related to east and west in that we know them by means of our path around it, so the Christ stands midway between separatism and indifferentism. In trying to understand why he dealt with each of these as he did, we need first to seek what dim knowledge may be open to us of the way in which the human mind of Jesus must have worked toward that divine insight into our manifold life from which his gospel sprang.

He saw the race labouring and heavy-

laden. Why? Why are not men content to bask like the beasts in nature's providence? Because of the breath of God which stirs always to discontent, the desire for more power, the power that is happiness, the happiness that is power. Why, then, are men not seeking to acquire the object of this divine desire in harmony with the law of the great All-Father, by the limitless service of love? Such service would be the exchange of thought, and energy, and emotion freely fellow with fellow, until by happy usury each nature grew to angelic stature. Why not this? Because of pride.

Pride says, "I must be, do, have, something better than you must be, do, have." The only situation in which a man is able to discern pride is when going down into the valley of humiliation he finds it sweet. There are only a few such situations common to life. The chief is the too often transient joy

of marriage, either of sex or friendship, when the ideas "mine" and "thine" cease, a mood described in such lines as—

> "Fancy light from fancy caught,
> And thought leapt out to wed with thought."

> "All manner of fruits new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved!"

The divine seal of human distinction, self, is not at such times conscious except in giving and receiving. Like this is the humility of a father lost in gladness over the returning runagate, or the joy of motherhood. The new-made mother cannot say in her heart to her nestling what we habitually say to others, "I am superior to you." She is not even conscious of her humility, while she looks with dread to the time when she will no longer be the menial of the tiny person. Humanity in all ages has joined in crying, "Blessed are these poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom."

With the eyes of lover or parent we may catch such glimpses of the ideal attitude of man to God, of man to man, that for an hour we know what our habitual pride is ; otherwise we are all pride-blind, just as some are deaf to harmony or blind to colour. The true lover flouted by his bride's first fit of selfishness, the parent heart-stricken by unfilial conduct, may understand, if they will, that they share the habitual wistfulness of divine desire for human love, may realise, too, what joy might be if hearts on earth became in truth members one of another. Raised into a purer vision by their God-like emotion, they may perceive before their tears are dried that heaven demands a devotion to God not less personal and intense than that of the closest human relationship, and a friendship with men than which our intimacy with and love for ourselves could not be greater. But with the passing of their tears their realisation becomes again

dim and remote. Man as mere man fails to see the advantage of such a divine arrangement of life.

It was the unique property of the mind of Jesus to perceive with unwavering clearness the true nature of pride and of humility. His life proved to the world that the only true dignity is humility, but very slowly do the ages comprehend the full meaning that this grace had in his pure understanding. It is the clearness of his insight into the all-pervading pride of humanity and the humility of God which is surely the keystone of his human genius and the highest proof that he comes from above and is above all.

If, as the greater number of Christians believe, Infinite Spirit took the towel of our flesh and girded himself in order to give a human object to human love, the purpose was clearly not the rape of souls from earth, but to wash their stain so that this life might become clean every

whit. By the very act of the Incarnation the essential of virtue is proved to be humility, and pride to be the essential of our sin. Only when lost in love of the Christ of God can we see the kingdom; only drawn on by his love can we learn its laws and find rest to our souls. Whatever more his great doctrine of life in himself meant, it certainly meant that only when absorbed in him can we see the true nature of pride and humility, and perceive that only love can be meek and lowly, only the meek can inherit the earth, and the lowly the kingdom of heaven.

That the passion of love is needful to humility is proved to us by the fact that, except as the expression of love, meekness and humility are not virtues. Man seeks to inculcate lowliness as a separate grace, and produces a characteristic than which what we call "pride" is more noble. Our hearts know this, whether we are willing to confess it or not. To

be poor in spirit towards man is to be mean in spirit, except in the service of love to man ; in that service it is the divinest thing we know. So by relations with our kind we gain glimpses of the kingdom of God which is at our doors, as through those doors ajar, but by the love of the human person of God, "closer * * than breathing and nearer than hands and feet," we can live herein.

What we call unselfishness is, rather than humility, often spoken of as love's requisite, but when we pause we know this to be a slovenly manner of thought, because selfishness is noble or ignoble as it is or is not instigated by pride. Lack of due and humble care for self is most inimical to love, but humility is never thus inimical. Jesus allowed no affection —not even his mother's—to interfere with his mission. Affection which overrides the true dignity and purpose of the self gives falsely to love the foolish,

blind aspect it bears in common talk, making it synonymous with injustice rather than highest justice; giving it the attribute of pliancy rather than of yearning, of indulgence towards the loved one rather than of inexorable demand; figuring it as a parasite rather than as the unquenchable fire. It is because true love, by the necessity of its nature, must always refine dross and burn chaff (till it has accomplished the highest for its beloved) that regard for self must be a part of love, and humility its essence. Love cannot rise without the beloved, none can rise without the aid of love; therefore interdependence, not independence, is needful; but when Love loses sight of her own dignity she falls with her beloved in the dust.

John's baptism was to the patching of a rent past, but he who baptized with the fire of love decreed that the past should be consumed. The transition was to be entire from the outlook of pride to

the insight of humility, from striving after independence to striving for dependence.

It is not strange that Jesus, stepping forth into the midst of the Church which had not as yet seen God's humility, should have found it in need of reformation ; what is exceedingly strange is, that before the Church's most ardent supporters had had time to fully understand and give their final word of enmity, he, the patient Lamb of God, had cried shame upon them. It was in the early days of his popularity with the careless multitude that he pointed his teachings of holy modesty by warnings against the established forms of saintliness—warnings which were almost derisive. At the outset he said that the priests were in league with thieves, and called the Pharisees hypocrites. He was surrounded by crying evils which had no excuse of pious intention ; against none of these does he point the finger of

scorn or call down the curse of heaven, but against men who (whatever their petty vices) were undoubtedly swimming hard against the tide of open sin to attain salvation; fighting, a small band, against fearful odds, to preserve from destruction the purest ethic and the purest faith that the world then knew. This is one of the Christian mysteries —perhaps, if we could realise it, the hardest to overleap by faith; for if Jesus was merely human, and feebly inspired at that, this is precisely what we should have expected him to do. Incapacity to understand the difficulties and see the virtues of his opponents is the heritage of every common reformer.

But holding by his divinity, can we not, from faith's standpoint, see the reasonableness of his explanation? He tells them precisely why he could not hope to evoke their love, or gather them under the tender protection of his humility—it was because of their assur-

ance of religious knowledge. Their darkness they shared with all, even with his own disciples; but their assurances of light had built for them a wall round the heart, which is the organ of sight, a wall composed of the stern fibre of their very conscience. It was because of this that, while he wept tears of passionate pity, he was confident that they must die in their sins.

It was the obvious impossibility of all comparison between the intelligence of God and that of man which caused this assurance of light to be the deadly sin of spiritual pride. All that could ever be right on man's part would be earnest waiting for the consolation of the faithful by a further manifestation of the divine. No human concept could be other than a dim notion, approaching nearer to or receding further from the truth of God according to the attitude of the heart from which it sprang. All the more exalted strains of Jewish literature

bore witness to man's inbred knowledge of this necessary relation between Creator and creature; but the leaders of that Judaism which sprang from the separatist movement of Ezra's revival had lost the felt ignorance of adoration in their religious zeal, and by their literal theology had made the pride of dogma the very gate of heaven. Jesus, the more because he had submitted to the fetter of the finite mind, must have felt unutterable woe when, by the unerring instinct of his divine heart, he perceived to the full the shame and, as it were, impregnable falsity of such self-assurance. Believing that the very heart of God was his heart, we realise that he must have felt this, and can follow his words with understanding when we hear him say, with infinite sadness, "If ye had been blind ye should have had no sin: but now ye say, 'We see'; therefore your sin remaineth."

CHAPTER VII

FAITH ON EARTH

We have seen that when the Son of Man came, in that yesterday of the Judaic Church, as a Saviour from sin, it was not what is commonly called sinful that he ranked as the worst corruption. He said that impious vices were nearer to God than conservative religion, or any form of zealous piety which, having its root in a personal or party desire for heavenly favour, imprisons the generous emotions in an assured doctrine of a God whose character is a reflection of human selfishness.

It will perhaps be objected to this position that the Sadducees and Pharisees

had vices and crimes ; that it was these, not their lack of spiritual insight or their mistaken beliefs, that formed the barrier ; but it is evident that, however mercenary and vain they may have been, they could not have exceeded publicans and harlots in these faults. Clearly, then, it was not these faults, not even the fact that these were committed in the name of religion, that made Jesus so sure that the Jews would die in their sins. Had they been in any way conscious of misdoing, repentance must have been a possibility. That which damned them was the fact that they were convinced that they were in the right.

We believe that Jesus Christ is the same in this to-day of ours as he was in that yesterday, and certainly the question of practical importance to us is, how far the same conditions would obtain, the same religious parties repeat themselves, if he returned as a visible teacher in the present Church.

His own forecast does not give the religious every encouragement to expect his salvation. In the field of the Church tares are to be almost indistinguishable from wheat. The good and the bad are to be landed in the same net; the holy angels alone know the difference. There is no hint in his imagery, though we look for it greedily, as to whether the good or the bad shall be most. He gives no answer to his own question when he asks whether in the future he shall find faith on the earth.

This compels us to consider whether it may not be easy now to be a conscientious Christian and be as far from Jesus as were the Pharisees. It is distressing in this connection to note that the Pharisees were zealous "Christians." The very name "anointed one," as applied to a superhuman Saviour, originated in their literature. They made straight his highway, teaching the Messianic hope in almost all civilised

places and at home, deeply inculcating the expectation of the reward he would bring when the nation should be found obedient. It is true that they rejected Jesus, but out of very loyalty to the coming Conqueror of their faith. Is there any reason why in God's sight it should be more blameworthy to have a mistaken notion of the Coming One than a mistaken notion of the Christ who has come? Is not the latter error in the face of greater light? Jesus said that many would live triumphant lives in the strength derived from his name, praying to him, as the phrase would seem to mean, constantly, and in the end be told that he never knew them. This certainly implies that they could never have known him whom to know is life.

So absolute are the promises of Jesus to each and all who seek that it is difficult to say that earnest Christianity can miscarry. Yet we all believe that those who do not belong to our branch

of the Church, or way of holiness, are partially misguided, though we are not prepared to brand them as intentionally false. But if they be misguided in any of those most sacred and intimate questions the supposed answer to which they are prepared, if need be, to attest by their blood, why may they not miss entirely the gate of this Christ-life, into which, we are told, many shall strive to enter and shall not be able? If they may miss it, why not we? In faithful hearts the answer to this question is: "I have come to Him. In the absolution of the priest, or in the closet, or upborne on the heart of the multitude in face of some act of heroism or pathos, I have come. I have felt the instant contact that cleanses, and again and again I have heard the voice—'This is the way; walk ye in it.' In evidence I have brought forth fruits, few and small, yet truly of repentance." May Heaven help us all! Precisely by this same experience do

those who differ from us know that their difference is of God. Whatever be the meaning of that mystical dipping into the unseen world of soul, the sense of personal contact and comfort which by psychic law is the inevitable result of absorbed prayer, it is evident that personal experience can supply no criterion of opinion.

The whole question resolves itself into this—Is our standard the real mind and heart of Christ, or some conception of him removed from reality, perhaps as far removed from it as was the expected Messiah for whose kingdom the Pharisees compassed sea and land in missionary zeal.

Absolute as are the promises of guidance to all who abide in him, there are no promises to the adherents of the many false conceptions of Christ which must arise. This last of all the warnings of Jesus is perhaps the most awful and wistful. Faith in the false shall

accomplish the same outward prodigies of energy as faith in the true, and they who are carried away shall be, "if it were possible, the very elect." Does it not sound as if the characters of some of those who miss the kingdom shall be very like the characters of those who gain it?—in insight, humility, and faith *almost* the same.

The faith in himself which Jesus considered true faith is evidently the only passport required for entering the kingdom which is within us, and at our doors, and stretches into that eternity of growing personality in which God, who is never the God of the dead, develops all. Is it not, then, obvious that God's chief dramatic purpose in the battle between the Saviour and the faithful Pharisees must have been to make very clear the difference between the Christ of God and false Christs? It is impossible to read the life of Jesus without seeing that he was oppressed by a future

strewn with wrecks of mistaken faith ; it is also impossible to suppose that God developed a way of salvation that cannot be read by the humble, even in the swift running of life.

PART II

CHAPTER I

THE LESSONS OF THE CONTRAST

EVERY rule of true art is deeply divine, and as we find human art must always display light by shadow, so in God's drama of the Christ the divine virtue shows its unique character in contrast with—what have we found the greatest contrast to the divine—murder? cruelty? slander? dishonesty? lying? These bear only an incidental part in the Gospel story, except as at the last murder touches Jesus through the hand of the Church. The shadow which lies blackest behind the light is human religion. It follows that those features

of the Christ-life which ought to be most carefully studied are those which show in sharpest contrast to the piety of that day.

(a) *The Christ-life seeks no separation from evil-doers*

The reproach from which Jesus suffered—that he was friendly with those who were not good—stands for much as an indication of how little he valued a "holy" life shut off from the companionship and temptation of sinners. When added to this we find that in not one of his precepts is there an echo of the Old Testament doctrine as to the necessity of shunning the ungodly, we have very strong evidence that he differed as entirely with psalmist and prophet when they teach separation as he did with Pharisee. There are also many positive precepts which make it still harder to understand how the innate

separatist tendencies of human righteousness should have so long held their own against the divine in this matter—that strongest precept, for instance, in which the holy perfection of the Father is said to consist in equal treatment of bad men and good, and is held up for human imitation.

There is a very simple proposition which throws much light on this difficult matter—and needless to say that this doctrine of Jesus is difficult, and can only be grasped by faith. Let us clearly hold in mind that love that is less than liking is not love. If, then, we love our enemies and sinners, it must be by a genuine liking for all that it is possible to like in them, which cannot be found out without companionship and some community of interest. The ungodly have done well to jeer at "Christian love" when this element of liking has been lost in sophistry. If without unnaturalness we seek to discover all there

is to like in a man, the effort will bring us very near to the practice of Jesus, in whose life we see the great value which God sets on *bonhomie*, the God-likeness of simple "good-nature." He feasted with all who invited him, were they false teachers or corrupt politicians.

(*b*) *The Christ-life does not make any rite or doctrine a test of spiritual life*

In both cases when Jesus in his human ministry conformed to our need of outwardness he ran counter to all formerly established tests of piety. In the one case he moved in harmony with the emotional crowd at a great revival meeting; in the other he went alone to make atonement between God and man, by an act which revolted every pious conception. In both he exceeded the righteousness of all human religion. Even John, who must have rated his own baptism at its highest, forbade him; St.

Peter, even at his moment of highest inspiration, rebuked him; and they who sat in Moses' seat mocked. He exceeded their righteousness, not by refusing the outward and visible, which he knew as well as we do to be necessary, but by lifting it up, where surely it remains, above all walls wherein pious men have shut themselves from their fellows.

For let us consider what is the meaning of all his yielding to our outwardness, seen most profoundly in the Incarnation itself. Is it not that his knowledge of himself as being separate from sinners was far less conscious than his passion to stand beside us and be one with us? If it be true that in some existence of previous glory he deliberately planned to identify himself with us, that in itself, rightly understood, must be the supreme rebuke to any who, passing through the gate of some outward form, say to others, "You must come in to us, for we dare not go out to you." And

when, indifferent to all other ceremonies of the Jews, he courted John's baptism of repentance, was it not again to identify himself with the sinful and the penitent? When he yielded himself to the last penalty of the criminal law, was it not to take the very place of the lost and impenitent? If out of these acts of his we create shibboleths that divide and exclude, is not the mistake monstrous, and our guilt of the very same sort as his who, going up to the temple to thank God for a monopoly of grace, went down again unjustified?

The negative action of Jesus towards rite and doctrine corroborates perfectly this meaning of his greatest deeds. In every case where an act was made by the pious a test of righteousness, Jesus disregarded it. He gave the temple tax with almost humorous tolerance and a profound aphorism concerning the freedom of the sons of God. He always distinctly took his stand with those who were

lax in religious form. In leaving this earth he did not give any form to the Church of the future, but delivered it plastic into the very hands of those who had already tortured his body, and who in "myriads" flocked into it "zealous for the law."

(*c*) *The Christ-life yields nothing to the kingdom of evil*

The Pharisees yielded almost all the world. In the province of humanity all the Gentiles, all the Samaritans, many of the Sadducees also, all the common people, all the afflicted, were freely yielded up as Satan's lawful prey. In the province of letters and art all the culture of the Gentiles was given to him without so much as a wistful glance. In the province of human qualities all those which were not needed for the keeping of the law were delivered over to death. The more rabbinical writings are studied, the more we realise how little of life, as

we count fulness of life, was left to be sanctified.

In greatest contrast to this is the profound teaching of St. John. To declare of a man on whose breast he had leaned that all things were fashioned according to his thought, is to suggest that the responsibility of the Creator is very closely akin to that of human authorship, so making it impossible to conceive that whole realms of his creation are omitted from his care if he be indeed "faithful." St. John goes on to assert that God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save it. This is in unity with the whole life and teaching of Jesus; for not only does he not relegate anything except lack of faith to the kingdom of evil, but he so expends energy to express his loathing of the mental attitude of the Pharisees that we cannot suppose he came to save the Church merely into a larger and nobler form of separatism.

Nor does this conception contradict his commands to leave all things—even life itself—in order to attain salvation. In the battle of life a man must, if need be, slay any natural affection, or cut away his own members, rather than fail, holding all things subservient to the interests of war; but there is no hint in this teaching that all men will fight the better for being loveless or halt or blind, that those provinces of activity which may be misused should be abolished. From the life of Jesus it is evident that the case must be personal and extreme when the temptation ought to be cut off with the sin. Rather is the Christian's common way that narrowest path that lies along the height between the bottomless slopes of disuse and abuse.

(*d*) *The Christ-life will count friendships, intimate and more distant, obligatory*

That Jesus sought and won personal affection is perhaps the most marked difference between him and the Jewish rabbis. Whoever has known friendship between mind and mind, heart and heart, as the greatest earthly good, knows that nothing less could have had power to give those twelve mundane men their superior insight into "the mysteries of the kingdom"; whoever has not known it cannot have seen Jesus in the depth and breadth of his self-revelation. If a man does not realise communion with his brother whom he has seen, he cannot know how to commune with the unseen. It is the disciple who knew Jesus most intimately who speaks out with such decision as to the absurdity of supposing that we could leap from the darkness of our own

windowless self-consciousness into the glory of God's heart and mind, and live. "No man hath seen God at any time." The light must filter down to us through the Christ sent of God, and the brother always near us, by fellowship. No man can understand the manifestation of God in Christ but by the manifestation of Christ in man; the Word made flesh was the supreme revelation of friendship, only because friendship is the supreme means of grace. We have gone far to empty the word "love" of content, but if it contain less than the highest we can know on earth it cannot be the name of God.

If, then, we would be perfect, and walk as he walked, we must round out our powers of sympathy and understanding by intimacy with companions as diverse as the zealot and the publican, as St. John and Judas; and if we would love our enemies or opponents in doctrine, it must not be in a way that is less

than our utmost possibility of happy fellowship. Whether our relation with any such be indeed that of true fellowship is well tested by our willingness to receive favours from him as well as give them, for there is often more true generosity in taking for love's sake than in giving.

(*c*) *The Christ-life conserves and consumes the past in the interests of the future*

The place for conservatism in national life is in the lusty heart of progress, where it husbands garnered treasure. If that heart beat low, the conservatism becomes mere miserliness, the nation starves to death.

For religion, too, there is profit in conservatism, much every way, and chiefly because it preserves all sacred oracles ; but when it refuses to trade with its treasure it buries it in the napkin of futility.

Keeping in mind our belief that the divine author of the world's tragedy will teach his greatest lessons by the strongest contrasts, and perceiving that conservatism in religion showed itself most deadly in Judaism as it met the Christ, we will look for the perfection of the art of conserving in the spirit with which Christ met the Jews.

The Sadducean part of the Jewish nation met Jesus generations before he came, when the faith of the priestly class in the unseen defence of Jehovah failed, and they began to trust to their own arm to get them the victory. Just there history shows us that the priesthood began to reject the new light which the faith of the Pharisee was sucking in from the progress of thought. They did not refuse to advance in secular things; they refused to improve their religion. The resurrection, victorious prayer, the spiritual environment of human life—these had such small place

in their philosophy that when the Christ came to earth they cannot be said to have joined issue with him. He had no word for them but "Ye do greatly err; the kingdom shall be taken from you"; and they no earnestness to bring to him except that of fear for their own safety, which struck the murderous blow. Their conservatism in religion was of no more use than death is of use to life. It was not even in that stage of decomposition which gives enrichment to the roots of a new life, as Pharisaism was. It was the death of salt without savour, of a lamp that holds no oil.

The defect of conservatism is failure to see that the past must continually be sacrificed for the higher future. The virtue of conservatism is to accrete the faith of the dead; its vice is to have no faith in the God of the living. Pharisaism had enough faith to desire to supplement the past, to build upon it; it had not enough faith to lay the sacred

past upon the altar of sacrifice. The conservatism of the Sadducee, without progressive outlook, was stone dead; that of the Pharisee was alive, but because in it the desire to teach predominated over the desire to learn further, it was slowly causing the faith to perish.

In Jesus we have the perfect virtue of conservatism. He saw that the past must die to live, yet where in his life is the shadow of the iconoclast's hammer? He said that the temple must fall, but never hints to his followers to aid by so much as withdrawing from its ceremonial. The fact that the apostles for the greater part of their lives lent their countenance to the reeking knife of animal sacrifice does not seem to have entered largely into the imagination of the Church. What a proof of their Master's faith in God's process of natural decay and resurrection! Proof, also, that his method was to offer good rather than

to decry evil. This is the sublime tolerance of faith in contrast to the intolerance of belief, out of which true faith has died or is dying.

(f) *The Christ-life knows no moderation of zeal that springs from faith in the God of progress*

The vice of radicalism is to kick aside the past for the sake of novelty. The virtue of radicalism is to speed forward with a joyful faith in the "God of hope." In Jesus we have the perfect union of the virtues of conserving and of cutting at the roots. It was because he valued the golden grain of the past as priceless, that he would not prematurely destroy even its husk, and had perfect faith in its germinating.

The range of any man's zeal is bounded by the horizon of his hope. The world-pessimist may be ardent to snatch souls from the common doom ;

if so, he still hopes for the progress of the few. The sphere of strenuous effort for each one of us is the sphere in which we believe change may be gain.

The faith of Jesus in the future embraced all his Father's works; his zeal to realise that faith was correspondingly wide. Observe, too, the intensity of the effort as Jesus commanded it. Was ever scheme for gain, race for prize ardour of love, rage for conflict, intense in human imagery? These conceptions pale in passion and in interest beside the struggle for human salvation, as Jesus depicts it. His first part is always to show that thought fails to express God's intensity in the business. As man searches for the lost object of desire, as he rushes to meet the recovered one, as he gives up all else for some coveted thing, as he has patience in cultivating the fruit he needs, as he has courage in sending his nearest and dearest to battle and to die for the cause at heart—how

much more the Father heart of God for love of man ? Jesus argues from God's eagerness how terrible must be the need for the utmost exercise of every human power. The hosts of evil are up and out ; they are intense, wily, strong, and have power to kill all that is heavenly in human nature. Whatever the hosts of evil may be, it is obvious that Jesus was convinced that with unceasing activity they are bent on depriving the human race of its birth-right. Therefore all that a man has he must cast aside, and fight in God's armour, untrammelled by the garments of any hindering affection, any favourite prejudice, any outgrown creed, fight and contend for the progress of his own soul and the world's.

There is no question at all as to whether one who feeds only on the past, who is not inspired by a passionate faith that the future will be better than the past, can be a follower of Jesus. Certainly if there be any meaning in the figures

Jesus used, any depth in language, any understanding between man and man, the soul that is content to clothe itself in the faith of the past cannot wear the wedding garment. When Jesus saw the incoming of the Gentiles begin, his final word to Judaism was that the future could only ripen God's sheaf when the past had been yielded up to natural decay.

(g) *The zeal of the Christ-life is never busy with the keeping of moral law*

True righteousness must exceed that of men whose whole life and thought are engaged in the effort to live without disobeying God. Jesus took the highest ethic the world had ever known, and lifted it up into the region of thought and emotion where no man can possibly keep it inviolate. Then he said, "Your business is not the attempt to keep the law; growth and beauty, nourishment

and protection, are from the Father; your struggle must be to pray and trust, to watch that you may never be found except in the attitude of prayer and trust. The only righteousness that the Father recognises is the reflection of his own passion of love for you. This passion wrought out in your life is the great miracle which is God's reward for such prayer and fast and almsgiving as have for motive, not the keeping of the law, but communion with him." The test and result of this passion is not feeling or zealous preaching, but the acting out toward men of the love principle which will cause faith to persist through all storms, all changes in the appearance of truth, all shocks of new knowledge, all throes of development—a house on the rock, a home for the possessor, and a shelter for all who need his aid.

The keeping of a law is essentially a thing that can be seen. It seems im-

possible to devote oneself to it without some attention to the fine figure self will make, and it would seem from the whole contention of Jesus with the Pharisees that to seek to make the less pious admire piety in us, that is, to act for the sake of the influence of the action, is a sign of rottenness. There can be no law-keeping, of course, that does not tend to appearance. Even the character bestowed by God, a reward of secret communion, must be an open reward. The city set on a hill cannot be hid; the candle must be allowed to shine; the good works of faith are God's glory upon earth; but, mark this, the light of such character as can truly shine comes from the eye of faith turned God-ward. If the eye be turned otherwhere it is distinctly said that the very appearance of light will be darkness. It is clear that this darkness will bear a semblance of light, will be supposed to be light, so that the legal life and the life of faith

may be outwardly almost the same. Lest this be not taken in at the first saying, Jesus repeats the warning, "Take heed therefore that the light that is in thee be not darkness." He also said that they who spent their time endeavouring to do the works of the law, and to whom the power of the Lord had not been revealed, were given over to blindness, were "blind guides leading the blind." When he said of their pharisaic minutiae, "This ought ye to have done," it became evident that it was not the difference between keeping one set of rules and another which caused the distinction he was pointing out between blindness and sight. The difference is caused by the attention being directed God-ward or law-ward, and consists in the presence or absence of divine inspiration.

(h) *The Christ-life does not attack impious evils, but offers the wicked positive joys*

Consider the evil moral conditions with which the life of Jesus was thronged as by a multitude of devils. Slavery was an institution ; drunkenness was common and not forbidden ; the punishments wreaked upon criminals were of the most degrading kind ; the prisons were in fearful plight ; the poor were often shut into conditions which made leprosy and other diseases inevitable. The rich had vices which shortened life and injured their children ; the treatment of the sick was absurd ; the treatment of leprosy inhuman. Cruelty in all departments was the commonplace of life. Sharp practice and corruption in public and private business was the rule. The marriage customs were lax ; their violation was common. When do we ever see him, with his righteous heart vexed into burning words, publicly denouncing

one or all of these crying evils? Is it possible to conceive that he was not alive to the shame, misery, and devilishness of it all? We know that it must have been hourly a greater pain to him than any sight of intolerable wrong or shame has ever been for a transient period to us. It is clear, then, that he perceived some very grave reason for abstaining from direct effort against secular abuses.

The "repentance" preached by Jesus and his messengers was evidently one in which the turning from evil habits bore only an incidental, though necessary, part, for when he upbraids those who refuse to repent, it is their lack of faith, their deadness to the miracles of mercy performed in their midst, which he quotes as their sin. If his preaching had resembled that of the Rabbis, or of that higher product of Judaism, the Baptist, the reason he would have given for rejection would have been love of sin. But as the reason was lack of faith

his preaching must have consisted in an offer of some good which they had not the faith to accept. His works of mercy, which he urged as condemnation of the indifferent, were no direct argument against the works of evil, but they were direct proof that he who performed them in person or by proxy was not only able but willing to substantiate such offer as he made. That offer must have been of a very present joy in the Kingdom of love, as well as of a future blessing. The works must have been the inauguration of a régime of compassion and power which could have been realised and retained by whole communities had they so willed. It must have been a plain opportunity, an offer of unparalleled advantage, or he who was infinitely patient with ignorance and folly and crime could never have cursed careless cities, or bidden his disciples strike the dust from their feet against rejectors. He who knew what was in men could

not have lost hope even for one generation, if the sin of rejectors had chiefly been that very natural reluctance men show to give up their established habits, or the very natural irritation they display at being admonished for them.

That Christ's teaching had this positive character we learn from his own words—not by argument only. He himself likens his preaching to the gayest, most joyous thing in the world—little children at their play piping to their fellows in the mimic wedding procession, compared with which the preaching of John was as children playing at a funeral. Indeed, this simile may be pressed, for the funeral of evil deeds, the effort directed against sins of individual or community, is a function at which Jesus never offered to assist. To such a mission he never called a single disciple ; his call was to the joys of the bridal feast of love, and the vocation of his apostles was to follow in his steps

who came to receive the hospitality of sinners and to bear the reproach of being called their convive.

Attack on public evils may be necessary, may be performed, like Herbert's sweeping of the room, from the highest of all motives, but such attack is not more a part of Christianity than is the sweeping. The cleansing of the earth by Jesus was not the cleansing of the scavenger, not the injunction, "Brother, let me pull out the mote," but the creation of the good heart that yields good treasure, the engrafting into the root of the good stock which must bear good fruit.

Yet this divinely secret method is to be comprehended by faith, not sight. When the imprisoned Baptist heard all that could be told him concerning it he sent asking if its author were indeed the Messiah. The answer was to repeat the evidence — no denunciation of impiety, only the gifts of healing,

only the offer of good, and to add the warning, "Blessed is he who shall not be offended."

(i) *The Christ-life will deem happiness as salutary as grief*

The Pharisees attached the shame of guilt to poverty and affliction; it was the punishment of God for secret or open sin, personal or inherited; it was not sent in love but in anger. In opposition to this doctrine Jesus strongly insists on the blessedness of suffering, and, contrary to other Oriental teachers, his idea seems to have been that its chief use consisted in awakening desire. But it is also very plain from the whole course of his ministry that he considered the discipline of joy every whit as needful. Both are for the same end, to awaken the soul from its animal lethargy, that it may more and more keenly desire, till desire becomes im-

moderate, and must be slaked in God. If we consider both the high ambitions set before sufferers in the beatitudes and the sudden and almost maddening joys that his works of healing must have brought, with the fact that he considered the hard-heartedness of whole communities under this discipline of joy as the damning sign of death, we shall feel assured of the equal rank of happiness and grief.

It cannot be that happier man than Jesus ever lived. Is there one on the wide earth eager for fame, or power, or affection, or the consummate joy of expression, or the sensuous delight of perfect health and keen appreciation, who would not, if he dare lift his glance so high, envy him? For him death never bounded life; it was the agony of a day. The beyond was not even separation from earth, while it was perfect union with heaven. The Christ who honoured exhaustive labour and

the cross, honoured also the games of children, the marriage at Cana, the feasts of the publicans, the communion of friends during long tranquil walks in beautiful solitudes. The last appetising breakfast on the misty morning shore of Gennesaret, was the type of many a former love-feast. His disciples knew him always as the most comfortable provider, the incarnation of God's providence. It is as though he said to us: "What Heaven has joined, let not earth put asunder." Sadness and gladness are inseparable in the thought of God.

(j) *The Christ-life knows no compromise with evil*

When the literal fulfilment of any law is the object of life, that life is full of compromise. It cannot be otherwise, with the purest intention in the world, for the life is stronger than the letter, and cannot be made to dwell within it.

The conduct resulting from such effort must be a constant putting of new wine into old bottles; new patches on old garments. No man can live thus and retain his integrity. The letter-keeper must always be a casuist. The casuistry of the Pharisees (which St. Paul calls a hidden dishonesty, a crafty walk, a deceitful handling of God's commands) was necessary if, as they supposed, it was necessary to fulfil their Scriptures in every point. Without casuistry their life would have come to a deadlock. Law or life must have been relinquished.

This course of legal degeneration must always repeat itself when any rule of life or worship becomes tyrannous. When does such a rule tyrannise over conscience? When we set it up as a standard of spiritual life, either cramping the life within this garment or judging it by this dress.

The whole action of the Gospel drama turns on this point. Spiritual life must

eventually blossom into the virtues, but scrupulous virtue is no test of life. Law can, must always be, delusive; nothing is cleansing but love. The worst of sins, religious sins, subtle and insidious, batten upon the letter. Nothing but love constrains to purity without self-consciousness. None but the divine inspirer of hearts can hold the winnowing fan which leaves no chaff behind, or can kindle in our hearts the dross-consuming fire. The passion of love itself is both fan and fire, and for true lovers repentance is the gate of every day.

(k) *The Christ-life will thank God continually for the feast of life as he has presented it in all its wide diversity of good and evil*

The dealings of Providence in this world are not according to human ideas of justice, nor when we examine candidly the plan of nature does it seem good in

our sight. The tendency of the religious mind is always to distort nature or justice till they can be supposed to agree. On this point, in sharp clear contrast, the rabbinical mind lies black behind, throwing into relief the mind of Jesus. Jews for Jews, Pharisees for Pharisees, thought to reserve the virtues and their rewards for themselves and their proselytes. Misfortune was a proof of God's anger, insignificance of his indifference. They could not endure the thought that poverty and pain were equal blessings with prosperity, still less that open sin might find men nearer the Kingdom than law-keeping. They saw no reason for thanking God if they were "as other men" in his sight.

With candour and joyful trust Jesus perceives that God's ways do not lend themselves to man's understanding, much less to any theory of religious favouritism. The sparrows fall, innocent dead things, song and joy stopped,

sold for the least coin, and not one of them without God. The tower in its ruin crushes men no worse than their neighbours; the tyrant slays with the sacrifice the worshipper who is as pure and devout as another; the man who is born blind suffers for the glory of God. Out of this view of life grows his teaching—monarchies shall fall and be created in the lurid flames of bloodshed; see that ye presume not to interpret and say: "Here comes the Christ in judgment," or "there in victory": it is not for you to know God's times of punishment and reward, for he makes the sun of his love to shine on the evil and the good. Be quite satisfied that the day of judgment will never come according to your expectation, but in a manner in which, with your incapacity to judge, you will think wrong. It will appear to you as an evil-doer, and suddenly, in the darkness of your prejudice it will come, spoiling you of all your confidence.

And the joy of Jesus in all the mystery and apparent injustice of natural development had but one source—that it was good in the Father's sight, and that the future must reveal the interpretation.

Apart from the teaching of Jesus, youth is the only season of delight, because the heart then promises what the fancy pictures. Jesus says, "You, a grown man, are but a child in your Father's universe, and your heart promises truly. The pains and fierce struggles that whet your desires and increase your powers are but for a moment: be satisfied; all that you desire is yours. Seek not, for all these things shall be added to you. For it is your Father's good pleasure to give." To this we must add the reiterated and absolute promise that every prayer shall be answered. It is very remarkable that, while there is nothing in his simple repetition of his nation's apocalyptic phraseology to satisfy

curiosity as to a future state, no real answer at all to "what?" and "where?" and "how?", he should have been able entirely to satisfy hope, so that, for those who believe him, hope passes into trust, and there is no restless question. The "when" is to-day and onward, the "where," with the Father and the Christ, the "what," the realisation of the individuality, for no man is asked to be content because the prayers of others will be answered, and prayer, when true, is always the clearest expression of character.

Jesus, by his whole ministry cried: "I am come as a witness that God's relation to the whole world is that of a Father. Whosoever will accept my testimony shall enter at once by faith into this princely case. He will lose his life—all interest in his own advantage, for that is the Father's care, all value for his past self-seeking, for he will see it to have been worse than vain; he will

give his life in undying effort to open the eyes of others to this their joy. There will be increasing struggle all along the path; but remember, little children, what the Father sends each day of pain and conflict is enough for growth. You need not try to increase it by needless asceticism with the hope of adding a cubit; the Father knows best; and reject all fear or anticipation of ill, for sorrow is always measured and transient, the means to an end more worthy of your attention. Jesus never said, "Sufficient unto the day is the good thereof." By commanding to reject fear and encourage hope, he takes the chalice of each day, already full of the Father's benefits, and then pours into it joyous expectation till it brims over.

Certainly no soul can so rest in this teaching as to give up its self-seeking without entering into a relation with the teacher which, whatever name we give it, transcends all other relations. The faith

required to bridge so immense a gulf between the apparent and the real could only be born of personal embrace, nor could such embrace be possible to suffering men unless this witness of the Father had himself passed into the very heart of pain.

CHAPTER II

THE NECESSITY FOR THIS IDEAL

A careful consideration of the forces within the Church which commonly make for unrighteousness will show how natural and necessary are those aspects of the ideal of Jesus just enumerated.

(*a*) The greatest of these evil forces is undoubtedly the attitude of the saints towards sinners. If we go into any mixed company, the people who charm us, be we who we may, are seldom those remarkable for their piety; but if the pious man does not make himself agreeable to the secular man, this is no proof that his piety is the more agreeable to God, and if God be not pleased or the

impious attracted, the loss to the cause of righteousness is obvious.

The world that hated Jesus was the religious world. The Romans had no quarrel with him, nor the hybrid Herod, still less the publicans, sinners, and Samaritans. The "hatred" prophesied by Christ, and exemplified in his life, which "the world" or "all men" bestow on the principle of the Christ-life, has little if any place in excusing this failure of the religious which we are considering, because in the same spirit in which he said, "Ye shall be hated of all men because I am," he said, "I shall draw all men unto me," and the object of the apostolic life is to gain as wide an access to the hearts of men as possible. What Jesus predicted was that the natural man would lust against the Christ-inspired man; but in so far as his own history and the history of his church has interpreted this, it appears that the very worst

sort of natural man in this respect is the naturally religious man. Even Nero had to enlist the religious of Rome on his side before he could persecute the Christians, and no persecution has ever been carried on in the name of wantonness, but always in the name of religion. Evidently then, when the disciples were told to rejoice in persecution they were not told to rejoice in having failed to sympathise with the joys and sorrows of the world, or to attract its sympathy.

The Pharisees were hated by sinners for their separatism, their scrupulous conduct, and intolerance of any breach of Scripture or pious precedent. Jesus, on the contrary, was hated by Pharisees for his open affection for sinners, the gregarious tendencies of his conduct, and his intolerance of an exclusive religion. The Pharisees also attracted much genuine reverence from sinners. They were supposed to be too good for common life. They attracted wistful envy,

too. "Oh, if we could only be so good!" Jesus from the same class drew affection because he identified himself with all that was ordinary and familiar, and the people do not seem to have felt oppressed because he was far above them in goodness, but simply to have glorified God because he was what he was. These tests are easy to apply.

Perhaps we get at the divine insight into the true needs of the higher life best by analysing the general belief that a man is "the better for having sown his wild oats," and "more lovable for having a spice of the devil in him." In the depth of their thought people know that these phrases represent truth; it is no mere dare-devil mood that gives them birth. At the same time even careless and wholly secular men do not desire vice in another if they can obtain comradeship without it. They prefer fineness of character, but do not want it at the expense of those points of contact

which are necessary for fellowship. They require that a friend should dance when they pipe, and mourn when they weep.

This magical charm of entering into the moods of another is only attained by having been "hail fellow well met" with him, or those of his type, for years. There is no royal road to the difficult grace of love; intimacy is its only narrow way of pilgrimage. There is no true love without personal knowledge, and no sense of superiority in love so obtained. When a man opens his heart to us; when we see his efforts and inertia, his mistakes and wisdom, his pains and joys, his loves and hates, from his own point of view, contempt ceases from our hearts, as blindness from eyes touched by the finger of the Christ. It is then that out of a good heart of spontaneous love we bring forth good treasure. It is a most extraordinary thing that we should suppose loyalty to Jesus to forbid us this fellowship,

even if it force us to listen with patience to a man's ribaldry, or false religion, and watch with patience his bad or mistaken behaviour, and to be too respectful of the freedom God gave him to admonish until he desires our thoughts. Love is never self-conscious, but in case we should question our right to listen to error, Jesus repeatedly tells us that it is not that which enters in that defiles, not the outside of life that needs attention. There are warnings in the Gospel of the temptations connected with hearing, but it is not of the converse of wicked men that Christ warns, but of the danger of hearing amiss his own truth, or of being led astray by the apparent truth of false prophets, or deceived by the tenets of an exclusive religion.

We know that those who in all ages have been the greatest fishers of men have seldom been trained in the doctrine and way of life which they afterwards so successfully preached. Intimate

knowledge of the false has given the greatest power to the true, intimate knowledge of wrong the greatest power to righteousness. Does participation in sin give power to work good? Satan cast out Satan? Certainly not! No doubt the stains gathered by the persecuting Saul, the profligate Augustine, were better in God's sight than a stainless life unshaken by the passions of fellowship; but the power did not arise from the stain, rather from that deeper scope of thought and feeling which is produced by close contact with the sorrows of death and hell. The stain would not be necessary if men walked in the fellowship of persecutors and profligates holding hard by the Christ. What certainly would be necessary would be a far more intense life of secret devotion, a far more vivid realisation of the power of the Father who seeth in secret, and of the risen Christ. These necessities are not undesirable. If we

shun sinners, or only go among them to preach, we cannot learn the heart's lore we so sadly need, any more than could the Pharisees. If we go among sinners without the secret and intense grasp of the unseen hand, we cannot learn the lore of faith any better than the Sadducees. But between these two ways of life lies the way of him who lived thirty years among his people's sins and mistakes before he presumed to teach.

(*b*) Perhaps the second great source of unrighteousness is the degradation of art. Very close to the separation from sinners, probably the result of it, comes the tendency of a large class of pietists to cut off part of our natural faculties, to offer a maimed humanity to God, even making the maimed condition a test of righteousness.

The devotion to art with no didactic purpose in view, the compelling need of the artist to make and perfect, is not only an essential part of us, but perhaps that human faculty which is nearest to

the creative power of God. It may or may not be possible for us to tell what purpose it serves in the divine scheme of saving men from their sins; but none deny that it is part of us; every soul has a touch of it; humanity as a whole dedicates certain of her sons to its exclusive service. This faculty, either of making or, in its lesser degree, of appreciating that which is made, is the stronger for being stimulated by religious emotions; but it will not, for it cannot, lend itself to special pleading. The sceptre of power passes from it the moment it is so lent.

But a large class of Christians who have always believed that Jesus commissioned all his followers at all times to be special pleaders on his behalf, have yielded, and still yield, this intractable faculty to the devil.[1] Modified by cen-

[1] It is to be observed that asceticism, such as is found within the Roman and Anglican Churches, is of wider mind than Puritanism on this point, for the ascetic admits that art is good for the world, the highest vocation of some, although for himself, or for his community, he would abjure it.

turies of the Christ-spirit as they now are, they still, as far as they dare, believe the passion for undidactic art to be a sin ; they still, as far as they may, make its relinquishment a test of holiness. The avowed Puritanism of which this is characteristic, is not decrepit. It has in its ranks to-day a new movement of intense vitality.

It is not alone with Puritanism in its naked form that this sin lies of offering a maimed sacrifice, or, in other words, giving to God a part which purports to be the whole. The majority of the religious in all churches and sects assume that prayer for, and interest in, the arts are optional. Yet I cannot see that there is any escape from the facts. God has chosen to so make men that the theatre, the library, the concert-room, the joy of the eye and the dance, are influences of untold strength. If we add to these to-day that part of the newspaper which is the servant of them all, we have the

chief instruments of this large ministry, and the responsibility for the manifestation of the Christ-life in these can only lie with those who are his servants.

That our Lord's grasp should be upon the whole of our humanity is obviously necessary if he would be its Saviour, and we have seen that his ideal meets the necessity. His Father's work in creation and development was sacred in his eyes; no part of it was useless or beyond redemption. He said, "My Father works hitherto and I continue his work."

It would seem that no class of pietists could have so developed the notion of casting this holy faculty of art to the dogs of hell except by living for generations in artificial separation of thought. The leaders in it have always been poorly endowed with the faculty, and, being separatists, have never laid their heads upon the bosoms of men to whom it was all in all, or listened to these

witnesses for its divine power to lift heavenward long enough to feel any answering thrill. The mistake has been honest, but it has certainly been caused by the lack of fellowship and of that charity which St. Paul says is credulous and hopeful of all endeavour. At its root, near or far, probably lies the desire to attain heaven rather than to give lavishly to God and man. But whatever its cause, its results are obvious. Let us lay them before its advocates.

Granted that the greater part of all works of artistic worth are ungodly, whose the fault? Art cannot be didactic; it can be wholesome and recreative; it can be true, holy, glorious. If it is not this, the irreligious, whom you consider its sole authors and patrons, are not to blame. What could sinners bring forth but sin? The power was there for your using; if you, the good, have not used it, how can you expect the product to be good?

Have you looked on the white harvest fields of men ripe to this sickle, and besought God to send labourers? Have you watched every famous musician, writer, painter, actor, and dancer, and thanked God for all that was noble in character and work? Have you gone forth with all your influence to meet and encourage every improvement? Have you dedicated certain of your sons and daughters to this ministry? If, instead of this, you have required of every penitent that he should eschew all that is not of didactic or proselytising tendency, at whose hand will the degradation of this power of art be required? Surely it is you and you alone who have cried concerning this servant of God, "Crucify! crucify!" and the guilt will be upon you and your children.

The way in which the punishment falls on the children is chiefly by the false conscience engendered in them. And it is interesting to remark that this

false conscience, necessarily adopted by the worldling too, reacts on all sides in persecution of those who would return to the larger thought of Jesus. As several writers have recently noted, the greatest evil of pharisaism was its power over the minds that did not copy its rule of life. It had so sounded its trumpets and made broad its hems, that even the masses who found its burdens intolerable accepted its standards. How could it be otherwise? The Pharisees had interpreted the Scriptures to the people, and multitudes who cared nothing for their doctrine were still convinced that the Scriptures contained it. It is exactly so with modern purism. Any mission worker will tell us that the average sinner is loudest in his demand that the pious should refrain from all so-called "worldly" interests; so that if the saints of to-day should espouse, as indeed there is terrible need, the cause of that mightiest one among our teachers, the

theatre, the careless and vicious would join with the most rigid sect in reviling them. Thus the reproach of being a pleasure-seeker, once offered to Christ, is a thing to be surely reckoned upon in each effort to return to his all-embracing ideal.

If art in music and colour and form be the human effort (like the babe's unconscious imitation of its father) after God's mind as he spoke sound and light and multiform nature into being, surely the art of the drama is nearest his heart, since with his own breath he endowed humanity with its manifold movement and passion. It must be so; for using this very power of the drama of life over our hearts, he, feeling shame with our shame, veiling his face lest we could not see his glory and live, stooped and wrote his salvation upon the earth with the finger of his flesh.

(*c*) Very close to this separation which offers less than the humanity God

gave, is another stronghold of evil, the separation that offers more. It seems a more generous type of piety, an error "larger" not only in the sense that it gathers the greater number of wise men, but that it holds them in a higher sphere of action and thought. But it makes rites and doctrines the test of spiritual life; it teaches that God demands more than he gives. Heart, mind, offered in the simplicity of prayer and fellowship with man are not enough without rites at the hands, not of that priesthood which is in the nature of every brother-man God-serving, but of a class constituted by doctrines which are not evident to all normally-minded men even when their hearts are yielded to God. The brother must always mediate largely between man and Christ, as Christ between man and God, because we only find our souls by relationship, and cannot rise from nothingness to the sum of all without means; but as it is only to a certain

class of thoughtful and pious minds that the authority of any particular ordination recommends itself, it is hardly possible to read our Lord's contention with rabbinism and not feel that it is especially impious to make subscription to such authority a test of obedience to him.

This is the weakness to which religious humanity is most apt. The natural development of all religions, especially Judaism, illustrates this. Apart from the inspiration of immediate spiritual insight, we desire a sign so naturally, so deeply—a something visible between Church and world—that we are willing to maim the Church, or wrap her in sacerdotal cerements, if only we can claim her grace in peace behind some fortress wall. But when the sect most eager for converts asked Jesus when the Kingdom would come, he answered that it would never come in such outward semblance that men could say, "Here it is," and "Here it is not."

And if we have so read a Church doctrine into the Gospels that these words of Jesus carry no conviction, surely by the facts of modern life the necessity for this invisible nature of his ideal is abundantly proven, for whenever we contest the outward and visible signs of love's kingdom we kill love itself. In every controversy about the fences of the law we see the folly of supposing that God's heaven lies exclusively on one side or the other of a human contradiction, and perceive also that the lust for controversial victory is the death of comradeship.

Let us take one example of this out of all the passion and pain of controversial Christendom. In England it is the habit of many thousands of women (chiefly women, alas !) to spend the first hour of each day in the churches, taking part in the Communion service. Very simple is the celebration of the priest, very intense the atmosphere of silent

prayer. This prayer, so early, so silent, so intense, must be very near to the highest wish of Jesus for his flock ; but at the door of such churches we constantly find given a series of written petitions which are to engage the desire of these devout ones, some of these petitions a direct insult (there is no other word) to faithful souls who come to God by other ways, most of them of such a nature that they must weave into the inmost soul of the petitioner the subtle fibre of the partisan. If I pray God that you, who differ from me, may learn to worship him in my way, I insult your whole spiritual nature by belittling your present relation to God, of which I have no right to judge. If I pray that you and I may learn more and more to worship him in his own way, that is quite another prayer. If we believe in the words of Jesus at all we must believe that he who offers this prayer will go down to his house justified with God and

man rather than he who offers that. If the teaching of Jesus about Satan is not figurative; if there is an arch-fiend commanding the evil powers and thirsting for the world-soul, it is precisely where the holy ferment of the Church's life is quickest that he will try to cast the deathly leaven of the proselytising spirit, which destroys all true communion with the brother, and consequently with God.

We believe that it was precisely to contravene this most natural evil that our Lord waged war to the bitter death with the pious standards of his time. He was slain because he would not conform to rites and doctrines as a test of spiritual life. The whole history of the Church until to-day shows how essential his protest, and, as yet, of how little avail! Those forces within human nature which built up the false structure of Judaism around its purer inspiration, have been, and are still, dominant. It is still all but impossible for any of us to worship

ardently in such way as seems to us best without the conviction that it is the necessary way for all men, forgetting that they who strain at the outward expression of the life must of necessity swallow partisan hatreds.

(*d*) There are few things that counteract the force of Christ's ideal, and thus constitute a source of unrighteousness, more decidedly than the encouragement given by human religion to attack the vices both of the individual heart and of the social system. Consider how the ideal of the Christ-life transcends that of the moralist in the treatment of vice. Humanity is weary and heavy laden in its effort against its vices. No normally constituted sinner, however in appearance lost to all struggle, but is in reality torn and worn by the war of the better against the worse within; no society, however decadent, but is harassed and jaded by the same conflict. The good may have ceased to gain any victory; it

still goads its enemy in the flank. The man who has gone up a little in the moral scale imagines that below him there is no battle ; he slays a dragon and supposes that those it has slain have not wrestled ; but this is false. The natural heart of man, that curious balance of good and evil forces, must, unaided from above, war always with itself. The problem of how to improve this condition of things is the problem of salvation, both for the man who has dreamed of God, of reward, of punishment, and for him who, godless, merely seeks to utilise himself.

This problem Jesus solved, as we have seen, by pointing attention beyond the law to the power of an indwelling God. When Jesus was tempted to sin, he replied by no mere resistance, but by the statement that man lives by higher food and holier privilege. After setting forth the extreme demands of the law to his disciples, he ended by saying that a corrupt tree could not bring forth

good, nor a good tree evil fruit ; and when in the end he leaves them, he speaks the parable of the vine. A little analysing of our life will show that this teaching is based on a psychological fact, so well attested that one can only wonder that the burden of "the law" is still so constantly carried with blind obstinacy. We all know, looking inward, how futile is the toil law-ward, worse than futile, causing all those higher energies that ought to have been used for the joy of the world to be spent in an attempt at self-defence. Whether we are Christians or not, we can only be delivered from the body of this death by following the insight of Jesus into this common truth—that we can only control habit by fixing our interests upon, and feeding our passions with, some object which involves, but is more than, the law we would attain, for in truth no one ever comprehends a true ideal until he has irresistibly realised it, drawn by the

motive power of something beyond. If this is true of the individual life, how much more of the community? For instance, had the Jesuits in France of late years fostered a Christ-like attitude towards the Jews, they would have more surely prevented a hideous injustice than by denouncing the oppressors, though their failure in the latter direction, not their failure in the former, is the more common charge against them. The removal of abuses may be necessary as is the work of the scavenger's cart, but the labour involved in both must always be low and grotesque, and the latter has as much right to be labelled with the name of Jesus as the former. The years in which Christianity made the quickest strides against the crimes of the time, strides so great that history has no parallel, were those which saw her too weak to rebuke or chastise the evil-doer. Is this because it is good for the Church to be weak? It is rather because when

she is powerful, she has always refused to believe that good must supplant evil, and believed rather that evil must be evicted by good. When she is beaten down, afraid to make bold protests, to attack and scourge, forced to timidity and to lay aside her pride, she unconsciously attains to the blessing of the persecuted ; she is able to reverence man as man, to respect the liberty God chose to give him, to appeal to those softer sentiments and purer hopes which in every heart, even the hardened, are the weak things that confound the great.

There is something more here than we commonly want to perceive. It is said to be a proverb in the East that a father's favourite son is the youngest while he is youngest, the sick while he is sick, the rebellious while rebellious, and the lost until he is found. It was this little store of heart-knowledge that Jesus blessed and multiplied when by his whole ministry he said, "How much more

God!" Yet, on the whole, to-day the Church believes that the man who prays and obeys is nearer God than he who does not. It is as honest a mistake as ever Pharisee made, but it comes of spiritual pride, and out of it arises the sentiment that the Christian who does not attack evil-doers is recreant. But if the wrong-doer is wrapped in God's heart as is a delirious child in the mother's arms, his unconsciousness of privilege does not alter God's care for his birthright of liberty, his dignity, his manhood. It is said that an archangel dare not rail against a devil, but we, alas, have few such scruples with regard to God's own image. The result is not good; all simplicity in the Christian's relation to the world is destroyed; we are involved in complex passions; the safety of our children, the cause of good, cannot possibly depend upon the compromise with hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness which such carnal warfare involves.

We cannot rise in the scale by juggling with our integrity, calling that love which is more like bitterness, or calling our sentiments bitter and ourselves by the name of the Incarnate Love.

(*e*) Another source of evil is the spirit of revenge which sees the hand of God on our opponents more readily in the discipline of pain than in the discipline of joy. Very essential to the ideal of love is the attitude of Jesus to joy. He called misfortune blessed, but not above prosperity. In our tendency to call it more blessed than joy there may lie concealed a strain of subtle cruelty. How often we hear the good and kind speak of misfortune coming to this one and that, a note of pious thankfulness mingling with their moderate pity. Perhaps an otherwise motherly soul has tried to influence some one and failed; and she says, "It is well that God has sent him grief." Or some notorious evil-doer or religious opponent meets with the

terrors of pain, or calamity befalls a whole class of vicious or schismatic persons, and we say, "It is well ; God is speaking to them." In much of this, perhaps in all of it, there breathes the exact spirit of the Inquisition. There is no cruelty so bad as that which springs from the conscience, no eye so pitiless to the man in the flame as that which sees God setting light to the faggot. If we realised that Jesus went about converting hearts, solely, as far as his own will was concerned, by the discipline of joy, we shall have a truer test for our own motives ; for at times when great gladness befalls those to whom we feel opposed, we can ask ourselves whether we are as heartily glad that God is giving them that sort of opportunity as if he had sent grief.

But there is another, the greatest of all the aspects of the Christ-life, with which the idea of a paramount value for grief is incompatible, and this idea, by paralysing evangelical power, works death

at the very source of life. It is the aspect of the Gospel as "glad tidings." The great delight which Jesus certainly intended and expected to give to all who received him, his joy in giving and theirs in receiving, is a joy that has passed from our message—passed almost beyond our very power to conceive. How sadly we travesty that which he called the "good news" is shown by the attitude of the large majority of Christians to-day towards the cause of missions. Those few who are greatly zealous in this cause appear to find their motive, as did the whole Church of the Middle Ages, in the conception of a perishing world. But the development of religious thought, tending more and more to dwell upon the Creator's responsibility and faithfulness, and his slow, yet unending, process of re-creation, finds in our Lord's parabolic teaching little evidence of final loss. Every year increases in Christendom the number of those who believe

that the heathen, like ourselves, are in God's hand, shaping as clay upon the wheel to his most loving and gracious purpose, and who fear that the most that the missionary can do is, by giving to all the present disadvantage of a dangerously quick transition, to hasten the development of some. And the Christianity that such good men know is no great source of delight to themselves or their neighbours: why, then, impose it upon the heathen, since without it, they will not perish?

For my own part, I do not believe that the destruction of soul which Jesus foretold for those who receive him not, the weeping and gnashing of teeth, the worm, and the flame, mean other than the horror of a sentient understanding at finding that, although much may have been gained, its best opportunity has been knowingly rejected and put out of reach for ages, perhaps for ever.

But, interpret the eschatology of

Jesus as we may, if we accept his own conception of his mission, the fear of future wrath for ourselves or others ought never to affect the question of our labour to increase his personal following. It is impossible to suppose that the thought of the future doom was St. Paul's reason for preaching Christ, his reason was rather his conception of a supernatural light and life which lifted the Christian above his fellows as much here as hereafter. Did St. John labour for the sake of rescuing men from death? Did St. Peter promise to feed the flock to save it from destruction? This conception of their motive power arose in the "dark" and most pharisaic ages of the Church, and still taints our own. Theirs was still the inspiration of "glad tidings of great joy," and just in proportion as this revelation of gladness is recovered and taught, is the true mind of Jesus brought into perfect correspondence with the true need of the world.

PART III

CHAPTER I

THE GUIDING VOICE

Nothing in the story of Jesus is more certain than his promise to his followers that mystic knowledge of the right path would be theirs. In so many different phrases and figures is the promise given that its intention cannot be doubted. At the same time we know that it is conditional upon abiding in him, and there is abundant evidence in his words that many will abide in false Christs, *i.e.*, in false conceptions of him and of his truth, and receive no guidance, indeed be greatly astonished when they find that they have not gone straight to the

mark. But although this is true, none of us who trust in God the Father can believe that simple faith is ever denied the wisdom which it needs, when it has made any honest effort to use the wisdom already bestowed. We are each of us all alone in our sense of responsibility; when decision presses, the loneliness is appalling. God knows that we do not, cannot, understand the alpha of his name and creation, and if there be fatherhood, the ignorance or mistakes of a "little child" can never cause the prayer for guidance to be denied. We are therefore apt to ask how it can be possible for the mistake of the Pharisee to be the sin of the worthiest in the Church to-day as it was in the Judaic Church.

Let us eliminate from our statement that God will give wisdom, meanings frequently read into it, which, when clearly expressed, cannot be maintained.

We certainly do not believe that a

man will be fitted out by Heaven with a stock of correct opinions upon subjects on which he is not called to decide; and again, we do not mean that in matters in which he is called to decide, the guidance will take the place of knowledge which he could and ought to have gathered for himself. These two exceptions cover more ground than we are prone to suppose.

Here, for example, is an unlearned Sunday-school teacher upon his knees with the story of Abraham before him. He has heard a disturbing whisper. He prays for light. He reads some *ex parte* statement which easily convinces him that the higher criticism is folly. He is comforted; he has heard "the voice" in answer to his cry for light. He earnestly denounces henceforth all learned investigation into the ancient records. Of course it is manifest to a more educated mind that this man has earned no right to any opinion whatever

upon so vast a question, no more right than his child would have to look upon itself as well-informed in matters of which it had had no opportunity to learn. But our subject, blind as he is in the dense ignorance of supposed sight, yet endeavours to serve God, and therefore has a claim upon the promised guidance, and our only question is whether he has really made his prayer as a child, whether he has used as a humble child the light that was previously his, or whether his assumption of divine direction is not closely allied to that assumption of scriptural knowledge which inflated scribe and pharisee. This query would, of course, apply equally had our seeker supposed himself led into untried paths of novel interpretation.

The answer to such problems perhaps lies in this direction : however unlearned such men be they have in their hands the New Testament, and it is open to them to see that when the

disciples took to Jesus questions involving issues in which the whole world was concerned, he gave them no exact information, even on points which must have seemed to them essential to their usefulness as teachers. His answers to all questions, of followers or enemies, are at once like a rift in the heaven above, and a yawning of the earth beneath. They open the mind to heights and depths involved in the matter, before undreamed of, and fill the new sense of ignorance which they create with some aphorism of limitless significance. We cannot conceive Jesus replying to any deep question with a literal answer such as the questioner would be well able to presage. No one who has entered humbly into the study of the Gospels can suppose that if some one had come and said, "Lord, did Moses write all that is ascribed to him?" "Is the story of Abraham a transcript of fact?" Jesus would have

replied "Yes" or "No," sending the inquirer away with a complacent sense of his own good information, and in the temper of self-satisfied polemic. A child-like mind, poring lovingly over the scenes of his great mastery and great humility, must be at least dimly aware that any spirit of what we call "cock-sureness" on either side of a vast issue could never be inculcated by him. Surely, too, we see that the "babes" to whom great things are revealed are more likely to be those who eagerly suck in all obtainable knowledge, content to wait and learn its worth from Time, the sifter, than either those who are too eager to accept novelty for truth, or those who conceive themselves prudent to neglect the new hopes of deeper knowledge. To expect to be made wise by the easy leap of a revelation granted to necessary or wilful ignorance, is not the babe-like temper of mind imparted by Christ.

It will be clear, therefore, that this example covers many a case in which the promise of Jesus is quite falsely strained. Child-like faith in him is content with such sort of knowledge as he saw fit to give, the drawing out of the spiritual significance from the great parable of life, however and wherever found; content with such sort of ignorance as he permitted when of the future he said: "It is not mine to give," "No man knoweth save the Father," and of the past when he spiritualised popular beliefs rather than emphasise a minor point by professing to tell what the actual fact had been.

Next, as example of those who expect God to guide when they have neglected to obtain necessary secular knowledge, let us take a man who, having shunned those worldly experiences which give worldly wisdom, and associated only with those who seek religious paths, demands of God guid-

ance as to whether he shall trust a certain stranger or embark in a certain enterprise. This man ventures, and loses, and supposes himself to be set by God's providence further apart from the wicked world by his blameless affliction.

Have we not here another example of a large class of prayers for knowledge for which there is no warrant in the life of Jesus? He knew what was in men, and was careful that his disciples should have the same knowledge to the measure of their power. He set this wisdom on a level with harmlessness, and indeed we know that it is the first requisite of harmlessness; for lack of it the truest hearts constantly involve the Church in shame and men in sorrow. Capacity for judging the worth of men and the trend of events is only gained by patiently observing them; therefore Jesus does not ascribe to his humble followers the right to judge Israel because of their companionship with

him upon the Mount of Transfiguration, or in desert places, but because of their having been with him in his "temptations," a word which clearly does not refer to those typical conflicts with evil in which he was alone, but to the constant effort he was obliged to put forth to resist evil in human proximity. Furthermore, as to Judas with the rest is attributed this capacity to judge of men, it evidently arises, not from goodness but from observation of the contrasts of purity and evil; and the companions of Jesus had unique opportunity for learning judgment by this contrast. This quality of good judgment may exist without goodness, but goodness cannot be perfected without it. Lack of it is indeed so fruitful of shame and pain and stumbling that God, who tenderly leads where human sight must fail, often suffers hard experiences to lead such of his servants as, having in some degree this common gift of

sight in mundane matters, have thought to glorify him by neglecting its development. The world is the lesson-book God gives man, and it is not child-like to reject it and expect reward for doing so. Such attitude is only possible to those who, if their belief be analysed, consider a separateness essential which marks them off from and lifts them above their fellow-men — precisely the pharisaic position.

If, then, we leave out of account all prayers for such knowledge as is not necessary, and also all prayers for such knowledge as God expects us to acquire by prolonged effort, or to renounce, like other wealth, for the often more useful paths of conscious, and therefore not presumptuous, ignorance ; if, further, we regard a walk of close fellowship with different sorts of men as a condition of truest advance in the spirit of prayer, it will perhaps be found that all daily matters may be made the subject of

absolute trust in Heaven's wisdom, without the taint of that pharisaism which commonly mars the Christian life.

There is before all men always the problem of the immediate future calling for decision, and when between paths equally righteous, equally shrewd, the choice must depend on the mere probability of unknown results, the baffled mind is certainly permitted by the promises of Jesus to rest in his prescience, warranted, however small the issue, in humbly expecting to see the colt tied, or the man bearing the waterpot ; but he who has truly studied the great lessons of worldly experience and the drama of Jesus' life, will not boast himself in this guidance, perceiving that the Spirit helping infirmities is hampered by the greatness of the infirmities.

CHAPTER II

THE SIN OF SIGHT

It appears, from all we have urged, to be a very grave question whether it is possible for human beings ever to say "we see" in matters debateable, without soaking into their souls the sin of pharisaism. When Jesus enumerates the purposes of his ministry, giving sight to the blind is one chief figure for his enlightenment of heart and mind. Is it not obvious that acknowledgment of blindness is always the condition of the miracle? Also that, from the very nature of the spiritual light he has to impart, the opening of the soul's eye to Love's being is only the beginning of an

education which cannot proceed, as the progressive creed of the Pharisee did, from the known to the unknown, but always from the imperfectly known toward the unknowable? Joyful assurance of the heart is doubtlessly promised—above all, regarding that which "passeth knowledge,"—but did heart ever yet rest or rejoice in any knowledge that was not merely the door of expected revelation? Maiden of lover, father of son, friend of friend, say "I know," referring to a persuasion of faithfulness that will continue to reveal new depths. The very "I know" of love implies "I do not yet know," otherwise the future would be barren, and love turn to pity. If this be true of that progressive knowledge which alone can be given us of human hearts, how much more of our knowledge of the divine heart! and again, how much more must our mental powers lag always in straining after the divine mind! At what point could any of the

apostles have said truly, "We know so much of his doctrine, and on that foundation can build further knowledge"? Such mistakes he answered by revealing depths that engulfed the mental platform his followers had laid. When St. Peter cried by the Spirit, "Thou art the Son of God," the next word caused his highest conception of the divine Christ to perish in the fire of a higher. The early councils of the Church in their assured Judaic practice had yet to learn that their ordinances must drop into the past, like a corn of wheat. The wisdom that is from above is a growth undergoing constant transformation, a germ in the centre of ever-changeful root and branch. The Holy City that comes to us from God is not built by laying one stone on another, and is fringed below and above by the glory of the unseen; foundation there is truly—the Person of Love who made the constant sense of blindness the con-

dition of being led into his unknown ways. Even in regard to human learning the main difference between the mental atmospheres of the university and the market-place is that the learned feel ignorant and desire to learn, and the unlearned are self-confident, ready to teach: if we believe this of earthly things, how much more of heavenly things? Thus it is possible that religious truth ought always to be regarded as equidistant from (though far above) the differences of prayerful men.

If this estimate of the necessary method of the divine imparting be doubted, a strong presumption in its favour is lent by the obvious fact that it is the assurance of knowledge that has caused all disunion. The earnest, even though in doubt, will always have a working hypothesis; courage, effort, and making the best of its conditions, are the essentials of earnestness; but if we add to human earnestness the

assurance which says, "We have the mind of God on such or such a point, and all who differ from us differ from him," we have the dynamite which disrupts, and our religious history seems to show that it has worked more like hell's explosive than like the leaven of God. The whole progress of Christian thought has come down to us by means of the clash of opposing parties, the two swords which Jesus suffered in painful prophecy rather than according to his own glad ideal—"without observation." And still to-day, whatever the high moralising of some ethereal souls as to the right attitude of the assured towards an opponent, we all know that the attitude in its practical working is that of saying "Raca," or "thou fool." Veiled as it is in the progress we have made toward reverence for man as man, this attitude does and must dominate. The merest child among us, taking notes, is aware of this, and it is only sophistry

which denies it. In special instances, where personal holiness has appealed to our better understanding, we have all, of course, overleaped our sense of superiority. In other cases we are willing to embrace with almost hysterical sympathy whole classes which oppose us, if not in those things we consider most essential. But in all cases where we believe ourselves to have a means of grace ordained of God which others reject — be it belief in the doctrine of substitution, or in the authority of Rome, the use of rightly administered sacraments or the use of an infallible Bible; be it abstinence from the playhouse, or abstinence from the conventicle—it engenders in us the general belief that the commonalty of men in the opposite class are our inferiors in good sense, morals, and piety. Because in any moment of self-examination we are willing to confess ourselves the greatest of sinners, it does not follow

that our general attitude of contempt is altered. Let those of an opposite party call our spirituality into question, and do we not feel bound, in witness to this special truth of which we are the custodians, to answer the calumny by causing some trumpet to be sounded, by making some manner of prayer at the street corners, some parade of our generosities and self-denial, to show that "God's cause" is strong? Or if, being the exception that proves the rule, we only turn to the secret place of God, are we not tempted to cherish the hope that our reward will be the confounding of our enemies? Surely the trail of this serpent in the garden is very clear! Contempt is a strong word, but however we may strew flowers over it, it is the name of the slime. We all know it in naming the sentiment which our opponents as a class entertain towards us. We all equally deplore it.

Even in that former age of contempt

there must have been many of the Pharisees who deeply deplored the death of Jesus. Two, even among their rulers, did honour to his dead body. In that yesterday he suffered in the flesh from precisely this assurance that God's mind was known, and (leaving out the long massacre written in all our religious history) does he, who is the same to-day, suffer less now in the person of his little ones? Surely if we could realise that inasmuch as we prejudge the nearness to God, the inspiration of the least—the least, not the most saintly—of our opponents, we despise the Christ, we should see that there is some great fallacy underlying our notion of the benefit of doctrinal certainties.

If there be a more excellent way, the conviction that our brothers are further from the mind of God than we is no venial mistake, no failing that leans to virtue's side. Such a conviction is either very right of very right, or it involves

a conception of God's character which is false to love, and therefore impious in the highest degree. We cannot too often and too clearly repeat to ourselves that that worst sin, pharisaism, is innate and always committed in obedience to a conscience bred upon sacred lore and traditions as interpreted by some canon contrary to God's universal love.

In this connection an analysis of the denunciations of the Pharisees spoken by our Lord and by St. Paul is interesting. The contention of Jesus certainly was not that the Pharisees did not try to keep the law, nor when St. Paul took up the same theme, as, for example, in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, did he suppose that the man who was instructed in the law was the less prone to keep it; the argument evidently is that if the position is one of such boasted privilege, the life should be superior to the common failure of good men who are without the privilege;

if not, the privilege is only the letter of a spirit as well attained without it. Apply this argument to any party in our modern Church whose members suppose themselves to share some superior privilege, be it of doctrine or sacrament. If their assumption be true they ought undoubtedly to be superior in holiness of life to those without this privilege. Faith in the efficacy of the privilege must lead the rank and file of any communion to boast themselves of a high moral caste, and must lead all its members, even the most humble, ardently to desire the public recognition of such holiness as they have among them, and to be far more ready to attribute holiness to their brethren than to their opponents, because holiness is the only convincing proof of their doctrine. If, then, with that same courtesy by which our Lord, for the sake of argument, accorded to the Pharisees their own claim, we admit that they sit in Moses' seat, and that all things they

bid us observe we ought to do, is it not evident that if they are not thus superior in holiness "they say and do not?" And it is commonly admitted by the impartial that this general superiority of life is not found in any particular communion.

Then it is further clear, from the situation of those who consider their privilege the only God-given clue to the difficulties of life, that they must desire their leaders, if not themselves, to be held in religious honour before men, must desire the uppermost seat, the dais of the synagogue, the greeting in the market, the title of rabbi. As long as party-spirit prevails in faith—and the very faith of the separatist makes party-spirit inevitable—these distinctions must be coveted. In the very nature of the case trumpets and street-corners must always have been the concern of party-spirit; and the things which are their equivalent after nineteen centuries of

modification are all those which pertain to religious prestige. Vanity and pride enter largely into all human action, but the outstanding sin of scribal casuistry was neither pride nor vanity; it was zeal for the letter, to the ignoring of the spirit. The ostentation which Jesus so vividly portrays and derides in scribe and Pharisee must have had the exaltation of their literal way of salvation as its motive, otherwise his words would have been unjust of the majority, and would have had for their aim a folly too self-evident and trivial to have justified their weight.

As an example of the necessity laid on party zeal to seek honour from men, the rivalry between Church and Dissent in England to-day is perhaps the best, for where in Christendom is a higher estimate of the duty of love and humility likely to be found? How great, for example, would be the grief of all good Churchmen should they see social pre-

cedence accorded to the dissenting ministry rather than to the Church clergy, and how sincere would be the thanksgivings of the rank and file of Dissent! How inevitable these sentiments to the self-assured spirit!

Again, when we insist on a certain way of religion, it follows as a matter of course that we bind burdens on others that we do not lift ourselves. We come to our particular beliefs by inheritance, environment, or temperament. The point for which we contend is no burden to us. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred there has been no struggle to accept, but in any case it is over. If we would cast off prejudice, go out from our own point of view in sympathy and in generous candour, we should soon involve ourselves in those burdens of perplexity which others feel; but as zealous partisans we shall never do this. We would thrust upon others what is to them an intolerable belief or practice,

the burden of which we are incapable of feeling.

Almost any separatist doctrine illustrates this point, but take as an instance the Puritanical negations which we have already discussed. The leaders of the "higher life" assemblies, such as those of Mildmay, Keswick, or Northfield, do not hesitate to retain on men's consciences as sins the use of things liable to abuse. The dance, the toast, the gambling game, the cost of fashion—they do not hesitate to say that these things, as well as devotion to the arts, bar the gate of holiness. A moment's consideration will show that they are not touching this burden of renunciation themselves, for their whole way of life is removed far from desire for the things prohibited. Burdens they have, but not those which they bind on others; if men say to them, "We are not sure that these things which you condemn are wrong; we have felt true benefit from them," is there any

one of these teachers who will go and let his own soul be swayed until he feels the storm and stress of the mingling of heaven and hell in all things? I think not.

Once again, it is a curious study, one of which the report would be endless, to observe how surely the separatist sees life in a proportion which appears false to the larger mind. For example, in the matter of profanity, how many of those who reprove whatever in expletive they consider an approach to it, will preach a doctrine concerning God's character, attributing to him both bigoted mind and wrathful temper, never asking themselves which is greater—the name, or the character that sanctifies the name. So, in every case, the tithing of mint and anise must arise, just as justice and mercy must fail, in a partial mind. Even we, as partisans ourselves, can always see that in the minds of those pietists who oppose us details of differ-

ences obscure the weightier matters which are the common property of all the earnest. We see clearly enough that they cannot strain at these gnats without swallowing camels; that they and their whole party would do far better to cleanse the inwardness of their spiritual perceptions than to polish their external points of separation. We know them to be blind leaders of the blind; we believe that when they beg money to advance their peculiar views they beg for a false cause; and we find that they make their converts more virulent than themselves. It is very strange to stop and think that precisely these sins with which we charge our opponents — the same with which Jesus charged his enemies — are also those which our opponents attribute to us.

It would surely be well if we meditated a little more on this similarity of the accusations we bring against others to those which they bring against

us and to the faults of the Pharisees. It might help us to suspect that the subtlety of the serpent and the poison of the viper are in very much of what we call zeal for God's cause. We are so sure that if we had lived in the days of our fathers we should not have joined in the cruelty of religious persecutions. Alas, if it is only the habit of the age which has improved, while our motives are no purer, if we are still slaying those prophets who chance to disagree with us, there is nothing more certain than that all the righteous blood shed by our persecuting fathers will also be required of us.

CHAPTER III

LOVE'S SCEPTICISM

It may be that the wings under which the Christ of God would gather us bear no more relation to our vexed creeds concerning his teachings than does the brooding note of the mother bird to the causes which threaten her young. Enough for her that there is need; she shelters them in herself. It would certainly seem from the Gospel story that, not the knowledge which is self-evident to all men, but that which is self-evident to all who repent of their dead selves, is sufficient. Jesus brought new tidings, but he seems to have taught that repentance would perfectly attune the mind to his news.

Is there, then, any gospel to which all men—not by virtue of perfect sanity, for that is rare, but by virtue of true repentance—must subscribe? In such a frame, are not most men willing to try faith in the humility of God as set forth in the touching message of Jesus' life and words? The Infinite taking upon him the meekness and humility of personal love, love that, when all else has failed, is eager to accept this last wretched gift of repentant tears, and lead the donor upon a fresh path, walking with him hand in hand: this is the picture Jesus drew of omnipotence.

After age-long discussion as to what are the essentials of Christian doctrine, prayer remains the essential. The Fatherliness of God, as taught by Jesus, implies constant prayer, not for "salvation," which has come to mean personal escape, but for that heart-felt creed, those graces and favours which are only valued that they may be offered to God. Prayer

is the very germ of the new life. Personal asking and receiving is the deepest, as well as the simplest, mystery of faith, but it is a mystery of nature too, for it lies at the foundation of all corporate life. Certainly the quietism that will not exert the individual will upon the divine, and would make prayer something less than insatiable desire, is in direct contradiction to Jesus' most oft-repeated command. Prayer is not all ; we who believe in the divinity of the Son of Man, we who believe in much concerning his life and death, are glad to affirm that it is not all ; but if prayer has any meaning, if the word of Jesus has been reported truly, if the Father spoke in him, if the Father be God, then prayer in its simplest meaning of passionate request, is the essential. "He shall guide you into all truth."

It is not possible to suppose that the leading of the individual will be less varied, more in accordance with our expectation than the divine working in

the Church has ever been. The blind Church which cannot accept the spiritual religion of the Christ in its purity and entirety, until it has read the continuation of its own selfish and material religions into it and out of it once more, is led by ways that it knows not; and we see in the more intimate record of any age of the Church that the divine life quickens successively now one phase of religious thought and now another, as if that which had become hackneyed could not be its vehicle. Are we not, therefore, bound to believe that in the manifold diversity of Christian fellowship, in the long stream of thought and sentiment that flows through Christian literature, there is room and food for all possibilities, for all limitations of the individual, who is surely safe with God if he will but honestly pray. Just as, in natural things, isolate himself as he will, he is still an organic part of the race, moving with it in its development,

so, when he prays, he is lapped around by the Spirit that informs the Church; think what he may, do what he may, he must move with the great march of the world-soul advancing to its God.

Let us consider whether, if indeed Jesus still live and be with us, we have any reason for so radical a failure of belief in him as the Church has always shown, affirming that he does not abide by his own simple words and lead each soul into fullest life, without outward conformity one to another, or the supremacy of the doctrinaires. Undoubtedly dogma is needful, and its profoundest study, as also large conformity, as a matter of convenience; at the same time it is certain that either God in the human personality of the Shepherd King has direct dealings with each of us, or the Church's greatest tenets are false. If the object of her adoration exists—divine, human, true to his own manifestation of himself — she maligns his

power. For his words of promise are very clear—food and raiment for the soul, imparted by his own friendship, so exclusively by himself that he says, "I am—before Abraham, after the world is ended—I am the way of truth."

Surely, the same wings of salvation under which the Christ of God would have gathered the Church of Jerusalem are still extended to shelter us. Surely, as he called them he calls us, to come out of all our zealous separatism, out of all effort to materialise the breath of the Spirit and to complacently see whence and whither God moves. Surely, the salvation Jesus bids us seek unrestingly, is the power to walk with him unscathed in the fiery furnace of the sin of the world. Surely, the rest he offers is nothing less than the very friendship of God. Would not many a robust and powerful soul, who now goes lonely in self-repentance, be glad to follow if the Church re-

echoed the call to this fellowship in the fulness of intellectual and passionate life? Would not many a repentant, yet dubious soul rejoice if bidden to nestle in the downy under-feathers of divine protection amid the winds of doubt? Would not the very sound of the brooding-call, heard apart from the lesser things which environ and prejudice it, induce repentance in weary multitudes? If to echo this call be the sole, or even chief, commission of the labourers, the fields are perhaps more ripe to harvest than we dream.

THE END

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